

1. The prophet owns the receipt of God's answer to his former representation, and the impression it made upon him, *ver. 2.* *O Lord, I have heard thy speech, thy hearing,* so some read it, that which thou wouldst have us hear, the decree that is gone forth for the afflicting thy people; *I received thine,* and it is before me. Note, Those that would rightly order their speech to God, must carefully observe and lay before them, his speech to them. He had said, *chap. ii. 1.* *I will watch to see what he will say,* and now he owns, *Lord, I have heard thy speech;* for if we turn a deaf ear to God's word, we can expect no other but that he should turn a deaf ear to our prayers, *Prov. xxviii. 9.* I heard it, *and was afraid.* Messages immediately from heaven, commonly struck even the best and boldest men into a consternation, Moses, Isaiah, and Daniel, did *exceedingly fear and quake:* but besides that, the matter of this message made the prophet afraid, when he heard how low the people of God should be brought, under the oppressing power of the Chaldeans, and how long they should continue under it, he was afraid lest their spirits should quite fail, and lest the church should be utterly rooted out and run down, and being kept low so long should be lost at length.

2. He earnestly prays that for the *elects sake,* these days of trouble might be shortened, or the trouble of these days mitigated and moderated, or the people of God supported and comforted under it. He thinks it very long to wait till the end of the years, perhaps he refers to the seventy years, fixed for the continuance of the captivity, and therefore Lord (saith he) do something on our behalf *in the midst of the years,* those years of our distress, tho' we be not delivered, and our oppressors destroyed, yet let us not be abandoned and cast off. (1.) Do something for thine own cause; *revive thy work,* i. e. thy church, that is the *work of God's own hand,* formed by him, formed for him, *revive that,* even when it walks in the midst of trouble, *Psal. cxxxviii. 7, 8.* Grant thy people a little reviving in their bondage, *Ezra ix. 8.* *Psal. lxxxv. 6.* Preserve alive thy work, so some read it, tho' thy church be chastened, let it not be killed; tho' it have not its liberty, yet continue its life, save a remnant alive to be a seed of another generation. *Revive the work of thy grace* in us, by sanctifying the trouble to us, and supporting us under it, tho' the time be not yet come, *even the set time* for our deliverance out of it; whatever becomes of us, tho' we be as dead and dry bones, Lord, let thy work be revived, let not that sink and go back, and come to nothing. (2.) Do something for thine own honour, *in the midst of the years make known,* make thyself known, for now verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, *Isa. xlv. 15.* make known thy power, thy pity, thy promise, thy providence in the government of the world, for the safety and welfare of thy church. Tho' we be buried in obscurity, yet, Lord, *make thyself known;* whatever becomes of Israel, let not the God of Israel be forgotten in the world, but discover himself even in the midst of the dark years, before thou art expected to appear. When in the midst of the years of the captivity, God miraculously owned the three children in the fiery furnace, and humbled Nebuchadnezzar, this prayer was answered, *in the midst of the years make known.* (3.) Do something for thy peoples comfort, *in wrath remember mercy,* and make that known: *shew us thy mercy,* O Lord, *Psal. lxxxv. 7.* They see God's displeasure against them in their troubles, and that makes them grievous indeed, there is wrath in the bitter cup, that therefore they deprecate, and are earnest in begging, that in the midst of wrath God would remember mercy to them, would make it appear that he is a merciful God, and they are vessels of his mercy. Note, Even those that are under the tokens of God's wrath, yet must not despair of his mercy; and mercy, meer mercy, is that which we must flee to for refuge, and rely upon as our only plea. He doth not say, *remember our merit,* but, Lord, *remember thy own mercy.*

3. God came from Teman, and the holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. 4. And his brightness was as the light, he had horns coming out of his hand, and there was the hiding of his power. 5. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. 6. He stood and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations, and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. 7. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. 8. Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses, and thy chariots of salvation? 9. Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. 10. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lift up his hands on high.

11. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear. 12. Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. 13. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah. 14. Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. 15. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.

It has been the usual practice of God's people, when they have been in distress, and ready to fall into despair, to help themselves by recollecting their experiences, and reviving them, *considering the days of old,* and the years of ancient times, *Psal. lxxvii. 5.* and pleading them with God in prayer, as he is pleased sometimes to plead them with himself, *Isa. lxiii. 11.* *Then he remembered the days of old.* This is that which the prophet doth here, and he looks as far back, as the first forming them into a people, when they were brought by miracles out of Egypt, a house of bondage, through the wilderness, a land of drought, into Canaan then possessed by mighty nations; he that thus brought them at first into Canaan through so much difficulty, can now bring them thither again out of Babylon, how great soever the difficulties are that lie in the way. Those works of wonders wrought of old, are here most magnificently described, for the greater encouragement to the faith of God's people in their present straits.

1. God appeared in his glory, so as he never did before or since, *ver. 3, 4.* *He came from Teman, even the holy One from mount Paran,* this refers to the visible display of the glory of God, when he gave the law upon mount Sinai, as appears by *Deut. xxxiii. 2.* whence these expressions are borrowed; then the Lord came down upon mount Sinai in a cloud, *Exod. xix. 20.* and his glory was as the devouring fire; not only to enforce the law he then gave them, but to avow the deliverance he had wrought for them, and to magnify it, for the first word he said there, was, *I am the Lord thy God that brought thee out of the land of Egypt:* I that appear in this glory, am the author of that work. Then his glory covered the heavens, which shone with the reflexion of that glorious appearance of his; the earth also was full of his praise, or, of his splendor, as some read it. People at a distance saw the cloud and fire on the top of mount Sinai, and praised the God of Israel, or the earth was full of those works of God which were to be praised. His brightness was as the light, as the light of the sun when he goes forth in his strength; he had horns or bright beams (so it should be rendered) coming out of his side or hand; rays of glory were darted forth around him; and with some rays borrowed thence, it was that Moses's face shone when he came down from that mount of glory. Some by the horns, the two horns (for the word is dual) coming out of his hand, understand the two tables of the law, which perhaps when God delivered them to Moses, tho' they were tables of stone, had a glory round them, these books were gilt with beams, and so it agrees with *Deut. xxxiii. 2.* *From his right hand went a fiery law for them.* It is added, *and there was the hiding of his power,* i. e. There was his hidden power, in the rays that came out of his hand; the operations of his power, compared with what he could have done, were rather the hiding of it, than the discovery of it; the secrets of his power as well as of his wisdom, are double to that which is, *Job xi. 6.*

2. God sent plagues on Egypt, for the humbling of proud Pharaoh, and the obliging of him to let the people go, *ver. 5.* *Before him went the pestilence,* which slew all the first-born of Egypt in one night, and burning coals went forth at his feet, when in the plague of hail there was fire mingled with hail; burning diseases, so the margin reads it, some think, those that wasted Egypt, others, those with which the number of the Canaanites was diminished before Israel, was brought in upon them. These were at his feet, i. e. at his coming, for they are at his command, he saith to them go, and they go, come, and they come, do this, and they do it.

3. He divided the land of Canaan to his people Israel, and expelled the heathen from before them, *ver. 6.* *He stood and measured the earth,* measured that land to assign it for an inheritance to Israel his people, *Deut. xxxii. 8, 9.* *He beheld, and drove asunder the nations* that were in possession of it, tho' they combined together against Israel, God dispersed and discomfited them before Israel. Or, he exerted such a mighty power, as was enough to shake in pieces all the nations of the earth. Then the everlasting mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow, the mighty princes and potentates of Canaan, that seemed as high, as strong, and as firmly fixed as the mountains and hills, were broken to pieces, they and their kingdoms were totally subdued. Or, The power of God was so exerted, as to have shook the mountains

mountains and hills, nay, and Sinai did tremble, and the adjacent hills, see *Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8.* To this he adds, *his ways are everlasting*, i. e. All the motions of his providence are according to his eternal counsels; and he is the same for ever that which he was yesterday and to day. His covenant is unchangeable, and his mercy endures for ever. When he *drove asunder the nations of Canaan*, one might have seen the tents of Cushman in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian trembling; all the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries taking the alarm, and though they were not in the commission given to Israel to destroy, nor their land within the warrant given to Israel to possess, yet they thought their own house in danger, when their neighbour's house was on fire, and therefore they were in a great fright, *ver. 7.* Balak the king of Moab was so, *Numb. xxii. 3, 4.* Some make the tents of Cushman to be in affliction, when in the days of judge Othniel, God delivered Cushman-rishathaim into his hand, *Judg. iii. 8.* And the curtains of the land of Midian to tremble, when in the days of judge Gideon, a barley cake in a dream overthrew the tent of Midian, *Judg. vii. 13.*

4. He divided the Red-sea and Jordan, when they stood in the way of Israel's progress, and yet fetched a river out of a rock when Israel wanted it, *ver. 8.* One would have thought God was with the rivers, and that his wrath was against the sea, for he made them give way and flee before him, when he rode upon his horses and chariots of salvation, as a general at the head of his forces, mighty to save. Note, God's chariots are not so much chariots of state to himself, as chariots of salvation to his people; it is his glory to be Israel's Saviour. This seems to be referred to again, *ver. 15.* *Thou didst walk through the sea*, through the Red-sea with thine horses, in the pillar of cloud and fire, that was his chariot born by angels, thus thou didst walk secure, and so as to accommodate thyself to the slow pace that Israel could go, as Jacob tenderly drove in consideration of his children and cattle; *thou didst walk through the heap or mud of great waters*; and Israel likewise was led through the deep as a horse in the wilderness, *Isa. lxiii. 13, 14.* When they came to enter Canaan, the overflowing of the water passed by, i. e. Jordan, which at that time overflowed all his banks, was divided, *Josh. iii. 15.* Note, When the difficulties in the way of perfecting of the salvation of Israel seem most insuperable, when they rise to the height, and overflow, yet then God can put them by, break through them, and get over them. Then the deep uttered his voice, when the Red-sea and Jordan being divided, the waters roared and made a noise, as if they were sensible of the restraint they were under, from proceeding in their natural course, and complained of it. They lift up their hands or sides on high, for the waters stood up on a heap, *Josh. iii. 16.* as if they would have made opposition to the orders given them, they lifted up their voice, lifted up their waves, but in vain, the Lord on high was mightier than they, *Psal. xciii. 3, 4.* With the dividing the sea and Jordan, notice is again taken of the trembling of the mountains, as if the stop given to the waters, gave a shock to the adjacent hills; they are put together, *Psal. cxiv. 3, 4.* when the sea saw it and fled, and Jordan was driven back, the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. The whole creation yielded, earth and waters trembled and truckled at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the mighty God of Jacob. But (as Mr. Cowley paraphraseth it)

*Fly where thou wilt, thou sea, and Jordan's current cease,
Jordan there is no need of thee,
For at God's word when ere he please,
The rocks shall weep new waters forth instead of these.*

So here, *Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers*, i. e. chanel were made in the wilderness, such as seemed to cleave the earth, for the waters to run in that issued out of the rock, to supply the camp of Israel, and which followed them in all their removes. Note, The God of nature, can alter and controul the powers of nature which way he pleaseth; can turn waters into crystal rocks, and rocks into crystal streams.

5. He arrested the motion of the sun and moon to befriend and compleat Israel's victories, *ver. 11.* The sun and moon stood still at the prayer of Joshua, that the Canaanites might not have the benefit of the night to favour their escape, they stood still in their habitation in the heaven, *Psal. xix. 4.* but with an eye to Gibeon and the valley of Aijalon, where God's work was in the doing, and which they, tho' so vast at distance, attended the motions of. At the light, i. e. at the direction of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear, they followed Israel's arms to favour them, according to the intimation of the arrows God shot, (as Jonathan's arrows, *1 Sam. xx. 20.*) and which way soever his spear pointed (the glittering light of which, they acknowledged to outshine theirs) that way they directed their influences, benign to Israel, and malignant against their enemies, as when the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Note, The heavenly bodies as well as earth and seas are at God's command, and when he pleaseth, at Israel's service too.

6. He carried on and compleated Israel's victories over the nations of Canaan, and their kings, slew great kings, and famous, *Psal. cxxxvi. 17, 18.* This is largely insisted upon here, as a

proper plea with God, to enforce the present petition, that he would restore them again to that land, which they were at the expence of so many lives, so many miracles, first put in possession of. Many expressions are here used, to set forth the conquest of Canaan. (1.) God's bow was made quite naked, taken out of the case, to be employed for Israel; we would say, his sword was quite unsheathed, not drawn out a little way to frighten the enemy, and then put up again; but quite drawn out, not to be returned till they are all cut off. (2.) He marched thro' the land from end to end, in indignation, as scorning to let that wicked generation of Canaanites any longer possess so good a land. He marched cum fastidio, so some; despising their confederacies. (3.) He threshed the heathen in anger; trod them down, nay he trod them out, as corn in the floor; to give them, and what they had, to be meat to his people Israel, *Mic. iv. 13.* (4.) He wounded the heads out of the house of the wicked, i. e. he destroyed the families of the Canaanites, and wounded their princes, the heads of their families; nay, he cut off the heads, and so discovered the foundations of them, even to the neck. Are they a building? They are raised even to the foundation: Are they a body? They are plunged in deep mire even to the neck, so that they cannot get out or help themselves. He brake the heads of Leviathan in pieces, *Psal. lxxiv. 14.* Some apply this to Christ's victories over Satan and the powers of darkness, in which he wounded the heads over many countries, *Psal. cx. 6.* (5.) He struck through with his staves the head of the villages, *ver. 14.* with Israel's staves God struck through the head of the villages of the enemies, whether Egypt or Canaan. Staves shall do the same execution as swords, when God pleaseth to make use of them. The enemy came out with the utmost force and fury, as a whirlwind to scatter me (saith Israel) for many a time have they thus afflicted me, thus attacked me from my youth, *Psal. cxxix. 1.* Pharaoh when he pursued Israel to the Red-sea, came out as a whirlwind; so did the kings of Canaan in their confederacies against Israel: Their rejoicing was, as to devour the poor secretly, i. e. they were as confident of success in their enterprize, as ever any great man was of devouring a poor man, that was no way a match for him, and his design against him was carried on with secrecy. But God disappointed them, and their pride did but make their fall the more shameful, and God's care of his poor the more illustrious. (6.) He walked to the sea with his horses, so some read, *ver. 15.* i. e. he carried Israel's victories to the great sea, which was opposite to that side of Canaan at which they entered; so that they went quite through it, and made themselves masters of it all; or rather God made them so, for they got it not by their own sword, *Psal. xlv. 3.*

Now there were three things that God had an eye to, in giving Israel so many bloody victories over the Cannanites. (1.) He would hereby make good his promise to the fathers, it was according to the oaths of the tribes, even his word, *ver. 9.* He had sworn to give this land to the tribes of Israel; it was his oath to Isaac, confirmed to Jacob, and repeated many a time to the tribes of Israel, *Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan.* This word God will accomplish, though Israel be never so unworthy, *Deut. ix. 5.* and their enemies never so many and mighty. Note, What God doth for his tribes, is according to the oaths of the tribes, according to what he hath said and sworn to them, for he is faithful that promised. (2.) He would hereby shew his kindness to his people, because of their relation to him, and his interest in them; thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, *ver. 13.* All the powers of nature are shaken, and the course of nature changed, and every thing seems to be thrown into disorder, and all is for the salvation of God's people. There is a people in the world that are God's people, and their salvation is that which he has in his eye in all the operations of his providence, heaven and earth shall sooner come together, than any of the links in the golden chain of their salvation shall be broken; and even that which seems most unlikely, shall by an over-ruling hand be made to work for their salvation, *Phil. i. 19.* (3.) He would hereby give a type and figure of the redemption of the world, by Jesus Christ. It is for salvation with thine anointed, with Joshua, who led the armies of Israel, and was a figure of him whose name he bare, even Jesus our Joshua. What God did for his Israel of old, was done with an eye to his anointed, for the sake of the Mediator, who was both the founder and foundation of the covenant made with them. It was salvation with him, for in all the salvations wrought for them, God looked upon the face of the anointed, and did them by him.

16. When I heard, my belly trembled: my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops. 17. ¶ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls. 18. Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

tion. 19. The Lord GOD is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief finger on my stringed instruments.

Within the compass of these few lines, we have the prophet in the highest degree, both of *trembling* and *triumphing*; such are the varieties both of the state, and of the spirit of God's people, in this world. In heaven there shall be no more trembling, but everlasting triumphs.

1. The prophet had foreseen the prevalency of the church's enemies, and the long continuance of the church's troubles, and the sight made him *tremble*, ver. 16. This goes on with what he had said, ver. 2. *I have heard thy speech and was afraid; when I heard what sad times were coming upon the church, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice*: The news made such an impression, that it put me into a perfect ague-fit, the blood retiring to the heart to succour that when it was ready to faint, the extreme parts were left destitute of spirits, so that *his lips quivered*. Nay, he was so weak and unable to help himself, that he was as if *rottenness had entered into his bones*, he had no strength left in him, could neither stand nor go, he *trembled in himself*, trembled all over him, trembled within him; he yielded to his trembling, and *troubled himself*, as our Saviour did, his *flesh trembled for fear of God*, and *he was afraid of his judgments*, Psal. cxix. 120. He was touched with a tender concern for the calamities of the church, and trembled for fear, lest they should end at length in its ruin; and that the *name of Israel would be blotted out*. Nor did he think it any disparagement to him, or a reproach to his courage, but freely owned, he was one of those that *trembled at God's word*, for to them he will look with favour; *I tremble in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble*. Note, When we see a day of trouble approaching, it concerns us to provide accordingly, and to lay up something in store, by the help of which we may rest in that day; and the best way to make sure rest for ourselves in the day of trouble, is to *tremble within ourselves*, at the word of God, and the threatenings of that word. He that has joy in store, for them that *sow in tears*, has rest in store for them that *tremble* before him. Good hope through grace, is founded in a holy fear; Noah that was *moved with fear*, and *trembled within himself* at the warning given him, of the deluge coming, had the ark for his resting place in the day of that trouble. The prophet tells us what he said in his trembling: his fear was, *when he cometh up to the people, when the Chaldean comes up to the people of Israel, he will invade them, will surround them, will break in upon them, nay, as it is in the margin, he will cut them in pieces with his troops*; he cried out, we are all undone, the whole nation of the Jews is lost and gone. Note, When things look bad, we are too apt to aggravate them, and make the worst of them.

2. He had looked back upon the experiences of the church in former ages, and had observed what great things God had done for them, and so he recovered himself out of his fright; and not only retrieved his temper, but fell into a transport of holy joy, with an express *non obstante* to the calamities he foresaw coming, and this, not for himself only, but in the name of every faithful Israelite.

1. He supposeth the ruin of all his creature-comforts and enjoyments, not only of the delights of this life, but even of the necessary supports of it, ver. 17. Famine is one of the ordinary effects of war, and those commonly feel it first and most that sit still and are quiet; the prophet and his pious friends, when the Chaldean army comes, will be plundered and stripped of all they have. Or, he supposeth himself deprived of all, by blasting, and unseasonable weather, or some other immediate hand of God. Or, though the captives in Babylon have not that plenty of all

good things, in their own land. (1.) He supposeth the fruit-trees to be withered and become barren; the *fig-tree* (which used to furnish them with much of their food, hence we often read of *cakes of figs*) shall not so much as *blossom*, *neither shall fruit be in the vine*, from which they had their drink, that made glad the heart: Suppose the labour of the olive should fail, their oil, which was to them as butter is to us; the labour of the olive shall lie, so it is in the margin, their expectations from it shall be disappointed. (2.) He supposeth the bread-corn to fail; the *fields shall yield no meat*, and since the king himself is served of the field, if the product of that be withdrawn, every one will feel the want of them. (3.) He supposeth the cattle to perish, either for want of the food which the field should yield, and doth not, or by disease, or being destroyed and carried away by the enemy; the *flock is cut off from the fold*, and *there is no herd in the stall*. Note, When we are in the full enjoyment of our creature-comforts we should consider, that there may come a time when we shall be stripped of them all, and use them accordingly, as not abusing them, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.

2. He resolves to delight and triumph in God notwithstanding; when all is gone, his God is not gone, ver. 18. *Yet will I rejoice in the Lord*, I shall have him to rejoice in, and will rejoice in him. *Destroy the vines and the fig-trees*, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, Hof. ii. 11, 12. But those who when they were full, enjoyed God in all, when they are emptied and impoverished can enjoy all in God; and can sit down upon a melancholy heap of the ruins of all their creature-comforts, and even then can sing to the praise and glory of God, as the God of their salvation. This is the principal ground of our joy in God, that he is the God of our salvation, our eternal salvation, the salvation of the soul, and if he be so, we may rejoice in him as such, in our greatest distresses, since by them our salvation cannot be hindered, but may be furthered. Note, Joy in God is never out of season, nay, it is in a special manner seasonable when we meet with losses and crosses in the world, that it may then appear our hearts are not set upon these things, nor our happiness bound up in them. See how the prophet triumphs in God, *The Lord God is my strength*, ver. 18. He that is the God of our salvation in another world, will be our strength in this world, to carry us on in our journey thither, and help us over the difficulties and oppositions we meet with in our way. Even then when provisions are cut off, to make it appear that *man lives not by bread alone*, may have the want of bread supplied by the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, and with the supplies of them. (1.) We shall be strong for our spiritual warfare and work: *The Lord God is my strength*, the strength of my heart. (2.) We shall be swift for our spiritual race, *he will make my feet like hinds feet*, that with enlargement of heart I may run the way of his commands, and out-run my troubles. (3.) We shall be successful in our spiritual enterprizes, *He will make me to walk upon my high places*, i. e. I shall gain my point, shall be restored unto my own land, and tread upon the high places of the enemy, Deut. xxxii. 13.—xxxiii. 29. Thus the prophet that began his prayer with fear and trembling, concludes it with joy and triumph; for prayer is *heart's-ease* to a gracious soul. When Hannah had prayed, she *went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad*. This prophet finding it so, publisheth his experience of it, and puts it into the hand of the chief-finger, for the use of the church, especially in the day of her captivity. And though then the harps were hung upon the willow-trees, yet in hopes they would be resumed, and their right hand retrieve its cunning which it had forgot, he set his song upon Sigionoth, ver. 1. wandering tunes, according to the variable songs, and upon Neginoth, ver. 19. the stringed instruments. He that is afflicted and has prayed aright, may then be so easy, may then be so merry as to sing psalms.



A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

O F T H E

Prophecy of ZEPHANIAH.

This prophet is placed last, as he was last in time of all the minor prophets before the captivity, and not long before Jeremiah, who lived at the time of the captivity. He foretels the general destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and sets their sins in order before them; which had provoked God to bring their ruin upon them; calls them to repentance; threatens the neighbour nations with the like destructions, and gives encouraging promises of their joyful return out of captivity in due time, which have a reference to the grace of the gospel. We have in the first verse, an account of the prophet and the date of his prophecy, which supersedes our enquiry concerning them here.

C H A P. I.

After the title of the book, ver. 1. here is, (1.) A threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, an utter destruction by the Chaldeans, ver. 2—4. (2.) A charge against them for their gross sin, which provoked God to bring that destruction upon them, ver. 5, 6. and so he goes on in the rest of the chapter, setting both the judgments before them, that they might prevent them or prepare for them; and the sins that destroy them, that they might judge themselves, and justify God in what was brought upon them. (1.) They must hold their peace because they had greatly sinned, ver. 7—9. But (2.) They shall howl because the trouble will be great. The day of the Lord is near, and it will be a terrible day, ver. 10—18. Such fair and timely warning as this, did God give to the Jews of the approaching captivity, but they hardened their neck, which made their destruction remediless.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah, the son of Ammon king of Judah. 2. I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD. 3. I will

consume man and beast: I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling-blocks with the wicked, and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD. 4. I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests; 5. And them that worship the host of heaven upon the house-tops, and them that worship, and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham; 6. And them that are turned back from the LORD, and those that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him.

Here is, 1. The title page of this book, ver. 1, in which we may observe, (1.) What authority it has, and who gave it that authority; it is from heaven, and not of men. It is *the word of the Lord*. (2.) Who was the instrument of conveying it to the church. His name Zephaniah, which signifies the *servant of the Lord*, for God revealed his secrets to his servants the prophets. The pedigree of other prophets, whose extraction we have an account of, goes no further back than their father, except Zecharias, whose grandfather also is named. But this of Zephaniah goes back four

four generations, and the highest mentioned is Hizkiah; it is the very same name in the original, with that of Hezekiah king of Judah, (2 Kings xviii. 1.) and, it is very probable, is the same person, and that our prophet was lineally descended from that pious prince, and being of the royal family, he could with the better grace, reprove the folly of the *king's children*, as he doth, *ver. 8.* (3.) When this prophet prophesied; *in the days of Josiah king of Judah*, who reigned well, and in the twelfth year of his reign, begun vigorously, and carried on a work of reformation, in which he destroyed idols and idolatry. Now it doth not appear, whether Zephaniah prophesied in the beginning of his reign, if so, we may suppose his prophesying had a great and good influence in that reformation. When he as God's messenger *reproved* the idolatries of Jerusalem, Josiah as God's vicegerent *removed* them; and reformation is likely then to go on and prosper, when both magistrates and ministers do their part towards it. If it were towards the latter end of his reign, that he prophesied, we sadly see how a corrupt people relapse into their former distempers. The idolatries Josiah had abolished, it should seem returned in his own time, when the heat of the reformation began a little to abate, and wear off. What good can the best reformers do, with a people that *bate* to be reformed, as if they *longed* to be ruined?

2. The summary or contents of this book; the general proposition contained in it is, that utter destruction is coming apace upon Judah and Jerusalem for sin. Without preamble or apology he begins abruptly, *ver. 2.* *By taking away I will make an end of all things, from off the face of the land, saith the Lord.* Ruin is coming, utter ruin; destruction from the Almighty; he hath said it, who can and will make good what he hath said, *I will utterly consume all things.* I will gather all things, so some, I will recal all the blessings I have bestowed, because they have abused them, and so forfeited them.

The consumption determined shall take away,

1. The inferior creatures. *I will consume the beasts, the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea,* *ver. 3.* as in the deluge, *every living substance was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground,* Gen. vii. 23. The creatures were made for man's use, and therefore when he has perverted the use of them, and made them *subject to vanity*, God, to shew the greatness of his displeasure against the sin of man, involves them in his punishment. The expressions are figurative, speaking an universal desolation. Those that fly never so high, as the fowls of heaven, and think themselves out of the reach of the enemies hand; those that hide never so close, as the fishes of the sea, and think themselves out of the reach of the enemies eye, yet shall become a prey to them, and be utterly consumed.

2. The children of men; *I will consume man, I will cut off man from the land.* The land shall be dispeopled and left uninhabited; not only I will destroy Israel, but destroy *man*. The land shall enjoy her sabbaths. I will *cut off* not only the *wicked men*, but *all man*; even the few among them that are *good*, shall be involved in this common calamity. Tho' they shall not be *cut off* from the Lord, yet they shall be *cut off from the land*. It is with Judah and Jerusalem that God has his quarrel, both city and country, and upon them he will *stretch out his hand*; the hand of his power, the hand of his wrath, and who knows the power of his anger? *ver. 4.* They that will not humble themselves under God's mighty hand, shall be humbled and brought down by it. Note, Even Judah where God is known, and Jerusalem where his dwelling-place is, if they revolt from him, and rebel against him, shall have his hand *stretched out* against them.

3. All wicked people, and all those things that are the matter of their wickedness, *ver. 3.* *I will consume the stumbling-blocks with the wicked*, the idols with the idolaters, the offences with the offenders. Josiah had taken away the stumbling-blocks, and as far as he could had purged the land of the monuments of idolatry, hoping that there would be no more idolatry; but *the wicked will do wickedly*, the dog will return to his vomit, and therefore since the sin will not otherwise be *cured*, the *sinners* must themselves be *consumed*; even the *wicked with the stumbling-blocks* of their iniquity, *Ezek. xiv. 3.* Since it was not done by the sword of justice, it shall be done by the sword of war. See who the sinners are that shall be consumed.

1. The professed idolaters that *avowed* idolatry, and were *wedded* to it. The remnant of Baal shall be *cut off*, the images of Baal, and the worshippers of those images. Josiah cut off a great deal of Baal, but that which was so close as to escape the eye, or so bold as to escape the hand of his justice, God will cut off, even all the remains of it. The Chaldeans would spare none of the images of Baal, or the worshippers of those images. The Chemarims shall be *cut off*; we read of them in the history of Josiah's reformation, 2 Kings xxiii. 5. *He put down the idolatrous priests*, the word is the Chemarim. The word signifies *black men*; some think because they wore black clothes, affecting to appear grave; others, because their faces were black with attending the altars, or the fires in which they burnt their children to Moloch. They seem to have been immediate attendants upon the service of Baal; they shall be *cut off with the priests*, the regulars with the seculars. The very name of them shall be *cut off*; the order shall be quite abolished, so as to be forgotten, or remembered with

detestation. And among other idolaters, the *worshippers of the host of heaven upon the house-tops* shall be cut off, *ver. 5.* who justified themselves in their idolatry with them that did not worship images, the work of their own hands, but *offered* their *sacrifices*, and *burnt* their *incense* to the *sun, moon, and stars*, immediately, upon the tops of their houses; but God will let them know, that he is a jealous God, and will not endure any rival; and tho' some have thought that the most specious and plausible idolatry, yet it will appear as great an offence to God, to give divine honours to a *star*, as to give them to a *stone* or a *stock*. Even the worshippers of the *host of heaven* shall be consumed, as well as the worshippers of the beasts of the earth, or the fiends of hell. The sin of the adulterers is not the less sinful for the gaiety of the adulterer.

2. Those also shall be consumed that think to compound the matter, between God and idols, and keep an even hand between them; that *halt* between God and Baal, and *worship* between Jehovah and Moloch, and *swear by both*; or as it might better be read, *swear to the Lord, and to Malcham*. They bind themselves by oath and covenant, to the service both of God and idols; they have a good opinion of the worship of the God of Israel, it is the religion of their country, and has been long so, and therefore they will by no means quit it; but they think it will be very much improved and beautified, if they join with it the worship of Moloch, for that also is much used in other countries, and travellers admire it, there is a great deal of good fancy and strong flame in it. They cannot keep always to the worship of a God whom they have no visible representation of, and therefore they must have an image, and what better than the image of Moloch, a king? They think they shall effectually atone for their sin if they *swear to Moloch*, and, pursuant to that oath, burn their children in sacrifice to that idol; and yet if they do miss in that, they hope to atone for it in worshipping the God of Israel too. Note, Those that think to divide their affections and adorations between God and idols, will not only come short of acceptance with God, but will have their doom with the worst of idolaters, for what communion can there be between light and darkness; Christ and Belial; God and mammon? She whose own the child is not, pleads for the dividing of it, for if Satan have half, he will have all; but the true mother saith, divide it not, for if God have but half, he will have none. Such waters will not be long sweet, if they come from a fountain that sends forth bitter water too; what have they to do to swear by the Lord that swear by Malcham?

3. Those also shall be consumed that have apostatized from God, together with those that never gave up their names to him, *ver. 6.* I will cut off, (1.) Them *that are turned back from the Lord*; that were well taught, and begun well, that had given up their names to him, and set out at first in the worship of him, but have flown off, and turned aside, and fallen in with idolaters, and deserted those good ways of God which they were brought up in, and despised them; those God will be sure to reckon with, who are renegadoes from his service, that began in the Spirit, and ended in the flesh; they shall be treated as deserters, to whom no mercy is shewed. (2.) Those that *have not sought the Lord*, nor ever enquired for him, never made any profession of religion, and think to excuse themselves with that, yet that shall not excuse them; nay, that is the thing laid to their charge; they are atheistical careless people that *live without God in the world*, and those that do so, are certainly unworthy to live upon God in the world.

7. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. 8. And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the kings children, and all *such as are clothed with strange apparel*. 9. In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters houses with violence and deceit. 10. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, *that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish-gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills.* 11. Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant-people are cut down: all they that bear silver are cut off. 12. And it shall come to pass at that time, *that I will search Jerusalem with candles*, and punish the men *that are settled on their lees*; that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil. 13. Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

Notice is here given to Judah and Jerusalem, that God is coming forth against them, and will be with them shortly; his presence as a just avenger, *his day* the day of his judgment and his

his wrath are not far off, *ver. 7.* Those that improve not the presence of God with them as a father, but sin away that presence, may expect his presence with them as a judge, to call them to an account for the contempt put upon his grace. The day of the Lord will come; men have their day now, when they take a liberty to do what they please, but *God's day is at hand*; it is here called his sacrifice, a sacrifice of his preparing; for the punishing presumptuous sinners is a sacrifice to the justice of God, some reparation to his injured honour; they that brought their offerings to other gods, were justly made themselves victims to the true God. On a day of sacrifice great slaughter was made, so shall there be in Jerusalem, men shall be killed up as fast as lambs for the altar, with as little regret, with as much pleasure, *The slain of the Lord shall be many.* On a day of sacrifice great feasts were made upon the sacrifices, so the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem shall be feasted upon by their enemies the Chaldeans; these are the guests God has prepared and invited to come and glut themselves, their revenge with slaughter, and their covetousness with plunder. Now observe,

1. Who they are that are marked to be sacrificed, that shall be visited and punished in this day of reckoning, and what it is they shall be called to an account for.

(1.) The royal family because of the dignity of their place shall be first reckoned with, for their pride and vanity and affectation, *ver. 8.* I will punish the princes and the kings children, who think themselves exempt from punishment; they shall find themselves accountable to God, and that as high as they are he is above them. They shall be punished, and all such as like them are clothed with strange apparel, that in contempt of their own country, (where probably it was the custom to go in a very plain dress as became the seed of Jacob that plain man) they affected to appear in the fashion of other nations, and introduced their modes in apparel; studying to resemble those from whom God had appointed them, even in their clothes, industriously to distinguish themselves. The princes and king's children thought scorn to wear any home made stuffs, tho' God had provided them fine linen and silks, *Ezek. xvi. 10.* but they must send abroad to strange countries, for their clothes, which would not please unless they were far fetched, and dear bought; and even those of inferior rank affected to imitate the princes and the king's children. Pride in apparel is displeasing to God, and a symptom of the degeneracy of a people.

(2.) The noble men and their stewards and servants come next to the reckoned with, *ver. 9.* In the same day will I punish those that leap on the threshold; a phrase, no doubt, well understood then, and probably signified the invading their neighbours rights, entering their houses by force and violence, and seizing their possessions, they leap on the threshold, as much as to say, the house is their own, and they will keep their hold of it; and accordingly make all in it their own that they can lay their hands on, and so fill their masters houses with goods gotten by violence and deceit, and with all the guilt thereby contracted. Nor shall it suffice them to say, that the ill-got gains were not for themselves but for their masters, and what they did was by their order; for the obligations we lie under to keep God's commandments, are prior and superior to the obligations we lie under to serve the interests of any master on earth.

(3.) The trading people and the rich merchants are next called to account, iniquity is found in their end of the town, among the inhabitants of Maktesh, a low part of Jerusalem, deep like a mortar, (for so the word signifies) the goldsmiths lived there, *Neb. iii. 32.* and the merchants: and they are now cut down, they are broke and have shut up their shops, and become bankrupts, nay, all they that bear silver are cut off in the first place by the invaders, for the sake of the silver they carry, which is so far from being a protection to them, that it will expose and betray them. The conquerors aimed at the wealthy men, and carried them off first, while the poor of the land escaped. Or it may be meant of a general decay of trade, which was a preface and introduction to the general destruction of the land. It is the token of a declining state, when great dealers are cut down, and great bankers are cut off and become bankrupts, who cannot fall alone, but with themselves ruin many.

(4.) All the secure and careless people, the sons of pleasure, that live a loose, idle life, are next reckoned with, *ver. 12.* they come from all parts of the country, to take up their quarters in the head quarters of the kingdom, where they take private lodgings, and indulge themselves in ease and luxury; but God will find them out and punish them, *At that time I will search Jerusalem with candles,* to discover them, that they may be brought out to condign punishment. This intimates that they conceal themselves, as being either ashamed of the sin, or afraid of the punishment of it; when the judgments of God are abroad, they hope to escape by absconding, and getting out of the way, but God will search Jerusalem, as search is made for a malefactor in disguise, that is harboured by his accomplices; God's hand will find out all his enemies wherever they lie hid, and will punish not only the secret idolaters, but the secret epicures and profane; and those are they that are here described and marks given, by which they will be discovered when strict search is made for them.

(1.) Their dispositions are sensual. They are settled on their lees;

intoxicated with their pleasures, strengthening themselves in their wealth and wickedness, they are secure and easy, and because they have had no changes, they fear none, as Moab, *Jer. xlviii. 11.* They had not been emptied from vessel to vessel. They fill themselves with wine and strong drink, and banish all thought, saying, *to-morrow shall be as this day,* *Isa. lvi. 12.* Their being settled on their lees, signifies the same with being inclosed in their own fat, *Psal. xvii. 10.* (2.) Their notions are atheistical; they could not live such loose lives, but that they say in their heart, *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil,* that is, he will do nothing, they deny his providential government of the world; what good and evil there is in the world, comes by the wheel of fortune, and not by the disposal of a wise and supreme director. They deny his moral government, and his dispensing of rewards and punishments; *The Lord will not do good* to those that serve him, nor *do evil* to those that rebel against him; and therefore there is nothing got by religion, nor lost by sin. This is the effect of their sensuality, if they were not drowned in sense they could not be thus senseless, nor be so stupid, if they had not stupified themselves with the love of pleasure. It was also the cause of their sensuality; men would not make a god of their belly, if they had not at first become so vain, so vile in their imaginations, as to think the God that made them altogether such an one as themselves. But God will punish them, their end is destruction, *Phil. iii. 19.*

2. What the destruction will be with which God will punish these sinners, and what course he will take with them. (1.) He will silence them, *ver. 7.* Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord, i. e. He will force them to hold their peace, will strike them dumb with horror and amazement: they shall be speechless, all the excuses of their sin, and exceptions against the sentence will be over-ruled, and they shall not have a word to say for themselves. (2.) He will sacrifice them, for it is the day of the Lord's sacrifice, *ver. 8.* he will give them into the hands of their enemies, and glorify himself thereby. (3.) He will fill both city and country with lamentation, *ver. 10.* In that day there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish-gate, so called, because near either to the fish-ponds or fish-market. It belonged to the city of David, *2 Chron. xxxiii. 14.* *Neb. iii. 3.* perhaps the same with that which is called the first-gate, *Zech. xiv. 10.* and if so, it will explain what follows here, *And a howling from the second,* viz. the second gate, which was next to that fish-gate: the alarm shall go round the walls of Jerusalem from gate to gate; and there shall be a great crashing from the hills, a mighty noise from the mountains round about Jerusalem, either from the acclamations of the victorious invaders, or the lamentations of the timorous invaded, or both. The inhabitants of the city, even of the closest, safest part of the city shall howl, *ver. 11.* so clamorous shall the grief be. (4.) They shall be stripped of all they have, it shall be a prey to the enemy, *ver. 13.* Their household goods, and shop-goods, shall become a booty, and a rich booty they shall be, their houses shall be levelled with the ground and be a desolation; those of them that have built new houses shall not inherit them, but the invaders shall get and keep possession of them. And the vineyards they have planted they shall not drink the wine of, but instead of having it for the relief of their friends that faint among them, they shall part with it for the animating of their foes that fight against them, *Deut. xxviii. 30.*

14. The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. 17. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. 18. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath, but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

Nothing could be expressed with more spirit and life, nor in words more proper to startle and awaken a secure and careless people, than the warning here given to Judah and Jerusalem, of the approaching destruction by the Chaldeans. That is enough to make the sinners in Zion tremble that it is the day of the Lord, the day in which he will manifest himself, by taking vengeance on them. It is the great day of the Lord, a specimen of the day of judgment, a kind of dooms-day, as the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans is represented to be, in our Saviour's prediction concerning it, *Mat. xxiv. 27.*

1. This day of the Lord is here spoken of as very near; the vision is not for a great while to come, as those imagine that put the evil day far from them, they deceive themselves that look upon it as a thing at a distance, for it is near, it is near, it hasteth greatly. The prophet gives the alarm like one that is in earnest, like one that awakens a family with the cry of fire, fire, when it is at next door that the danger is. It is near, it is near, and therefore it is high time to bestir yourselves, and do what you can for your own safety before it be too late. It is madness for those to slumber whose damnation slumbereth not, and to linger, when it hastens.

2. It is spoken of as a very dreadful day; the very voice of this day of the Lord, the noise of it when it is coming shall be so terrible, as to make the mighty men cry there bitterly, cry for fear as children do. It shall be a vexation to hear the report of it. In the last great day of the Lord, the mighty men shall cry bitterly to rocks and mountains to shelter them, but in vain. Observe how emphatically the prophet speaks of this day approaching, ver. 15. It is a day of wrath, God's wrath, wrath in perfection, wrath to the utmost. It will be a day of trouble and distress to the sinners, they shall be in pain, and shall see no ways of easing or helping themselves. The miseries of the damned are summed up (perhaps with reference to this here) in the indignation and wrath of God, which is the cause, and the tribulation and anguish of the sinner's soul, which is the effect, Rom. ii. 8, 9. It will be a day of trouble and distress to the inhabitants, and a day of wasteness and desolation to the whole land; that fruitful land shall be turned into a wilderness. It shall be a day of darkness and gloominess, every thing shall look dismal, and there shall not be the least gleam of comfort, or glimpse of hope; look round and it is all black. It is a day of clouds and thick darkness, there is not only nothing encouraging, but every thing threatening; the thick clouds are big with storms and tempests.

3. It is spoken of as a destroying day, ver. 16, 17. It shall be destroying, (1.) To places, even the strongest and best fortified. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities to break into them, and against the high towers to bring them down: for what forts, what fences, can hold out against the wrath of God? (2.) To persons, ver. 17. I will bring distress upon men, the strongest and stoutest of men, their hearts and hands shall fail them; they shall walk like blind men, wandering endlessly, because they have sinned against the Lord. Note, Those that walk as ill men, will justly be left to walk as blind men, always in the dark, in doubt and danger, without any guide or comfort, and falling at length into the ditch. Because they have sinned against the Lord, he will deliver them into the hands of cruel enemies, that shall pour out their blood as dust, so profusely and with as little regret, and their flesh shall be thrown as dung upon the dunghill.

4. The destruction of that day will be unavoidable and universal, ver. 18. (1.) There shall be no escaping it by ransom, Neither their silver nor their gold, which they have hoarded up so covetously against the evil day, or which they have spent so prodigally to make friends for such a time, shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. Another prophet borrowed these words from this, with reference to the same event, Ezek. vii. 4. Note, Riches profit not in the day of wrath, Prov. xi. 4. Nay riches expose to the wrath of men, Eccl. v. 13. and riches abused to the wrath of God. (2.) There shall be no escaping it by flight or concealment; for the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy, and where then can a hiding-place be found? See what the fire of God's jealousy is, and what the force of it, it will devour whole lands, how then can particular persons stand before it? He shall make riddance, a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land; as the husbandman when he rids his ground, cuts up all the briars and thorns for the fire. Note, Sometimes the judgments of God make riddance, even utter riddance with sinful nations, a speedy riddance; their destruction is effected, is compleated, in a little time. Let not sinners be laid asleep by the patience of God, for when the measure of their iniquity is full, his justice will both overtake and overcome; will make quick work and thorough work.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter we have, 1. An earnest exhortation to the nation of the Jews to repent, and make their peace with God, and so to prevent the judgments threatened, before it was too late, ver. 1—3. and this inferred from the revelation of God's wrath against them in the foregoing chapter. 2. A denunciation of the judgments of God, against divers of the neighbour nations, that had assisted or rejoiced in the calamity of Israel. (1.) The Philistines, ver. 4—7. (2.) The Moabites and Ammonites, ver. 8—11. (3.) The Ethiopians and Assyrians, ver. 12—15. All these shall drink of the same cup of trembling that is put into the hands of God's people, as was also foretold by other prophets before and after.

No. lxxvii.

1. Gather your selves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired: 2. Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORDs anger come upon you. 3. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth which have wrought his judgment, seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be, ye shall be hid in the day of the LORDs anger.

Here we see what the prophet meant, in that terrible description of the approaching judgments which we had in the foregoing chapter, from first to last; his design was not to drive the people to despair, but to drive them to God, and to their duty, not to frighten them out of their wits, but to frighten them out of their sins. And in pursuance of that he here calls them to repentance, national repentance, as the only way to prevent a national ruin. Observe,

1. The summons given them to a national assembly, ver. 1. Gather yourselves together. He had told them in the last words of the foregoing chapter, that God would make a speedy riddance of all that dwell in the land, upon which one would think it should follow, disperse yourselves, and flee for shelter where you can find a place; when the decree was absolutely gone forth for the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, that was the advice given, Mat. xxiv. 16. Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains; but here it is otherwise; God warns that he may not wound, threatens that he may not strike, and therefore calls to the people to use means for the turning away of his wrath. The summons are given to a nation not desired. The word signifies, either, (1.) Not desiring, that has not any desires towards God or the remembrance of his name; is not desirous of his favour and grace, but very indifferent to it; has no mind to repent and reform; yet come together, and see if you can stir up desires in one another. Thus God is often found of those that sought him not, nor asked for him, Isa. lxv. 1. Or, (2.) Not desirable, no ways lovely, nor having any thing in them amiable, or which might recommend them to God. The land of Israel had been a pleasant land, a land of delight, Dan. xi. 41. but now it is unlovely, it is a nation not desired; to which God might justly say, depart from me, but he saith, gather together to me, and let us see if any expedient can be found out for the preventing the ruin. Gather together that you may in a body humble yourselves before God, may fast and pray and seek his face. Gather together to consult among yourselves what is to be done in this critical juncture, that every one may consider of it, may give and take advice, and speak his mind; and that what is done may be done by consent, and so may be a national act. Some read it, enquire into your selves, yea, enquire into your selves; examine your consciences, look into your hearts, search and try your ways; enquire into yourselves that you may find out the sin, by which God has been provoked to this displeasure against you, and may find out the way of returning to him. Note, When God is contending with us, it concerns us to enquire into ourselves.

2. Arguments urged to press them to the utmost seriousness and expedition herein, ver. 2. Do it in earnest, do it with all speed before it be too late; before the decree bring forth, before the day pass. The manner of speaking here is very lively and awakening, designed to make them apprehensive (as all sinners are concerned to be) (1.) That their danger is very great, their all lies at stake, it is a matter of life and death, which therefore well requires and well deserves the closest application of mind that can be. It is not a trifle, and therefore is not a thing to be trifled about. It is the fierce anger of the Lord that is kindled against them, and is just ready to kindle upon them; that devouring fire which none can dwell with, which none can make head against, or hold up their head under. It is the day of the Lord's anger, the day set for the pouring out of the full vials of it, that you are threatened with, that great day of the Lord spoken of, chap. i. 14. Are you not concerned to prepare for that day? (2.) That it is very imminent; bestir yourselves now quickly, before the decree bring forth, and then it will be too late, the opportunity will be lost and never retrieved. The decree is as it were big with child, and it will bring forth the day, the terrible day which shall pass as chaff, i. e. which shall hurry you away into captivity as chaff before the wind. We know not what a day may bring forth, Prov. xxvii. 1. but we do know what the decree will bring forth against impenitent sinners, whom therefore it highly concerns to repent in time, in the accepted time. Note, It is the wisdom of those whom God has a controversy with, to agree with him quickly, while they are in the way, before his fierce anger comes upon them not to be turned away. In a case of this nature delays are highly dangerous, and may be fatal, they will be so, if by them the heart is hardened. How solicitous should we all be to make our peace with God, before the Spirit withdraws from us, or ceaseth to strive with us; before the day of grace be over, or the day of life; before our everlasting state shall be determined on the other side the great gulph fixed.

3. Directions prescribed for the doing of this effectually. It is not enough to gather together in a consternation, but they must seriously and calmly apply themselves to the duty of the day, *ver. 3. Seek ye the Lord*: that they might find mercy with God, they are here put upon seeking; for so is the rule, *seek, and ye shall find*. A general call was given to the whole nation to gather together, but little good is to be expected from the far greater part of them; if the land be saved, it must be by the interest and intercession of the *pious few*, and therefore to them the exhortation here is particularly directed. And observe, (1.) How they are described, they are *the meek of the earth*, or of the land. It is the distinguishing character of the people of God, that they are the *meek ones of the earth*; this is their badge, it is their livery: they are *modest*, and humble, and low in their own eyes, they are *mild* and gentle, and yielding to others, not soon angry, not very angry, not long angry, they are the *quiet in the land*, *Psal. xxxv. 20*. And they are *subject* and *submissive* to their God, to all his precepts and all his providences; acted by this principle and disposition, they have *wrought his judgments*, i. e. have obeyed his laws, observed his institutions, have made conscience of their duty to him, and have laid out themselves for the advancement of his honour and interest in the world. (2.) What they are required to do; they must *seek*; which notes both a *careful enquiry* and a *constant endeavour*, that they may know and do their duty. (1.) They must *seek the Lord*, seek his favour and grace, address to him upon all occasions, ask of him what they need, seek him early, seek him diligently, and continue seeking him. (2.) They must *seek righteousness*, seek to God for the performance of his promises to you, and see to it that you abound yet more in duty to him, seek for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to you, for the graces of God's Spirit to be implanted in you; hunger and thirst after it. (3.) They must *seek meekness*; this is a grace they were so eminent for, that they were denominated *the meek of the land*, and yet this they must *seek*. Note, Those that are never so good, must still strive to be better, that have never so much grace, must be still praying and labouring for more. Nay, they that excel in any particular grace, must still seek to excel yet more, in that, because *in that* most assaults will be made upon them by their enemies, and *in that* most is expected from them by their friends, and *in that* they are most apt to be themselves secure. *Si dixisti, sufficit, periisti*. In the difficult, trying times approaching, the meek will find exercise for all the meekness they have, and all little enough, and therefore should *seek it earnestly*, and pray that when God in his providence gives them occasion for it, he would by his grace enable them to exercise it, *to shew all meekness to all men*, in all instances; that *as the day is, so may the strength be*.

4. Encouragements given to take these directions; *it may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger*. (1.) You particularly that are the *meek of the earth*; tho' the day of the Lord's anger do come upon the land, yet you shall be safe, you shall be taken under special protection, *verily it shall be well with thy remnant*, *Jer. xv. 11. Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey*, *Jer. xlv. 5. I will deliver thee in that day*, *Jer. xxxix. 17. It may be you shall be hid*; if any be hid, you shall. Good men cannot be sure of temporal preservation, for *all things come alike to all*, but they are most likely to be hid, and stand fairest for a distinguishing care of providence. It is expressed thus doubtfully, to try if they will trust the goodness of God's nature, tho' they have but the *it may be* of a promise; and to keep up in them a holy fear and watchfulness, lest they should seem to come short, and should do any thing to throw themselves out of the divine protection. Note, Those that hold fast their integrity in times of common iniquity, have reason to hope, that God will find out a hiding-place for them, where they shall be safe and easy, in times of common calamity. They shall be hid (as Luther said) *aut in caelo, aut sub caelo*, either in heaven or under heaven, either in the possession of heaven, or under the protection of heaven. Or, (2.) *You* of this nation, tho' it be a *nation not desired*, yet in the day of the Lord's anger with the neighbour nations, when his judgments are abroad, *you shall be hid*, your land shall be preserved for the sake of those few meek ones that stand in the gap, to *turn away the wrath of God*. It concerns us all to make it sure to ourselves, that we shall be hid in the *great day* of God's wrath; and if we hide ourselves in chambers of duty, God will hide us in chambers of safety, *Isa. xxvi. 20*. If we prepare an ark, that shall be our hiding-place, *Gen. vii. 1*.

4. ¶ For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon-day and Ekron shall be rooted up. 5. Wo unto the inhabitants of the sea-coasts, the nation of the Cherethites: the word of the LORD is against you: O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. 6. And the sea-coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks. 7. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah, they shall feed

thereupon, in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

The prophet here, comes to foretel what share the neighbour nations should have in the destructions made upon those parts of the world by Nebuchadnezzar and his victorious Chaldees, as other of the prophets did at that time: which is designed, (1.) To awaken the people of the Jews, by making them sensible how strong, how deep, how large the inundation of calamities should be, that the *day of the Lord* that was near, might appear the more dreadful, and they might thereby be quickened to prepare for it, as for a general deluge. (2.) To comfort them with this thought, that their case, tho' sad, should not be singular, *Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris*: and much more with this, that tho' God had seemed to be their enemy, and to fight against them, yet he was still so far their friend, and an enemy to their enemies, that he *repented* and would *revenge* the indignities done them.

In these verses we have, the doom of the Philistines, that were near neighbours and old enemies to the people of Israel. Five lordships there were in that country, only four are here named, Gaza and Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron, Gath the fifth is not named; some think, because it was now subject to Judah. They were the *inhabitants of the sea-coasts*, *ver. 5*. for their country lay upon the great sea: the *nation of the Cherethites* is here joined with them, which bordered upon them, *1 Sam. xxx. 14*. and fell with them, as is foretold also, *Ezek. xxv. 16*. The Philistines land is here called Canaan, for it belonged to that country which God gave to his people Israel, and was inserted in the grant made to them, *Josh. xiii. 3*. This land is yet to be possessed, *five lords of the Philistines*, so that they wrongfully kept Israel out of the possession of it, *Judg. iii. 3*. which is now remembered against them. For tho' others rights may be long detained unjustly, the righteous God will at length avenge the wrong.

1. It is here foretold, that the Philistines, the usurpers, shall be *dispossessed*, and quite extirpated. In general, here is a *wo* to them, *ver. 5*. which coming from God, speaks all misery; *The word of the Lord is against them*. The word of the former prophets, which, tho' not yet accomplished, will be in its season, *Isa. xiv. 31*. This word, now by this prophet is against them. Note, Those are really in a woful condition, that have the *word of the Lord against them*, for no word of his shall fall to the ground. They that rebel against the precepts of God's word, shall have the threatnings of the word against them. The effect will be no less than their destruction, (1.) God himself will be the author of it, *I will even destroy thee*, who can make good what he saith, and will. (2.) It shall be an universal destruction, it shall extend it self to all parts of the land, both city and country: *Gaza shall be forsaken*, tho' now a populous city, it was foretold, *Jer. xlvii. 5*. that *barrenness* should come upon Gaza; Alexander the Great razed that city, and we find *Acts vii. 26*. that Gaza was a desert. Ashkelon shall be a *desolation*, a pattern of desolation; *Ashdod shall be driven out at noon-day*; in the extremity of the scorching heat they shall have no shade, no shelter to protect them, but then, when most incommoded by the weather, they shall be forced away into captivity, which will be an aggravating circumstance of it. Ekron likewise shall be *rooted up*, that had been long taking root. The land of the Philistines shall be dispeopled, there *shall be no inhabitant*, *ver. 5*. God made the earth *to be inhabited*, *Isa. xlv. 18*. otherwise he had made it *in vain*; but if men do not answer the end of their creation, in serving God, it is just with God that the earth should not answer the end of its creation, in serving them for an habitation; man's sin hath sometimes subjected it to this *vanity*. (3.) It shall be an utter destruction. The sea-coast that used to be a harbour for ships, and a habitation for merchants, shall now be deserted, and be only *cottages for shepherds* and *folds for flocks*, *ver. 6*. and then perhaps put to better use, than when it was possessed by the lords of the Philistines.

2. It is here foretold, that the house of Judah, the rightful owners, shall *recover the possession* of it, *ver. 7*. The remnant of them, that shall *return out of captivity*, when God visits them shall be made to *lie down in safety in the houses of Ashkelon*; to lie down *in the evening*, when they are weary and sleepy. There *they shall feed* themselves and their flocks. Note, God will at length restore his people to their rights, tho' they may be long kept out from them.

8. ¶ I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border. 9. Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and salt-pits, and a perpetual desolation, the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

them. 10. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified *themselves* against the people of the LORD of hosts. 11. The LORD *will be* terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and *men* shall worship him, every one from his place, *even* all the isles of the heathen.

The Moabites and Ammonites were both of the posterity of Lot; their countries joined and both adjoining to Israel, they are here put together in the prophecy against them.

1. They are both charged with *the same crime*, and that was reproaching and reviling the people of God, and triumphing in their calamities, *ver. 8. They have reproached my people*; while God's people kept close to their duty, it is probable, they reproached them for the singularities of their religion; and now they had revolted from God, and were fallen under his displeasure, they reproached them for that too. It has been the common lot of God's people in all ages, to be *reproached* and *reviled* upon one account or other; thus the old serpent spits his venom; and *pride* is at the bottom of it, it is in *their pride* that they have *magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts*, thinking themselves as good as they, as great, and every way as happy. It is the *contempt of the proud* that God's people are filled with, *Psal. cxxiii. 4. They have spoken big* (so some read it, *magna locuti sunt*) *against their border*, *ver. 8. against those of them that bordered upon their country*, whom upon all occasions they insulted: or, against the *property* they claimed, which they disputed, or the *protection* they boasted of, which they ridiculed; they *spoke big against the people of the Lord of hosts*, as a deserted, abandoned people; *great swelling words of vanity* are the genuine language of the church's enemies. But *I have heard them*, saith God, and will let you know that I have heard them. I have *heard*, and I will reckon for them, *Jude 15.* And if God hears the reproaches and revilings we are under, it is a good reason why we should be as a *deaf man that hears not*, *Psal. xxxviii. 14, 15.* Nay, God not only takes notice of, but interests himself in the reproaches cast on his people, because they are *his*; and it is certain, They who look with disdain upon the people of the Lord of hosts, thereby dishonour the Lord of hosts himself. See this very thing charged on Moab and Ammon, *Ezek. xxv. 3, 8.*

2. They are both laid under the same doom. Associates in iniquity may expect to be so in desolation. See with what solemnity sentence is pronounced upon them, *ver. 9.* It is the *Lord of hosts*, the sovereign Lord of all, who has authority to pass this sentence, and ability to execute it; it is the God of Israel, who is jealous for their honour, it is he that has said it, nay he hath sworn it, *As I live, saith the Lord.* The sentence is, (1.) That the Moabites and Ammonites shall be quite destroyed; they shall be as Sodom and as Gomorrah, the marks of whose ruins in the Dead-sea, lay near adjoining to the countries of Moab and Ammon; they shall, tho' not by the same means, even fire from heaven, yet almost in the same manner be laid waste; not again to be inhabited, or not of a long time. The country shall produce nothing but *nettles*, instead of corn; and there shall be *brine-pits*, instead of the pleasant fountains of water, with which the country had abounded. (2.) That Israel shall be too hard for them; shall *spoil them* of their goods, and *possess* their country by lawful war. Note, Proud men, sometimes, by the just judgment of God, fall under the mortification of being trampled upon themselves, by those, whom when time was, they haughtily trampled upon. And *this shall they have for their pride.*

3. Other nations shall in like manner be humbled, that the Lord alone may be exalted. *Ver. 11. The Lord will be terrible* unto the Moabites and Ammonites in particular, who have made themselves a terror to his Israel: For (1.) *Heathen gods* must be *abolished*; they have long had possession, and their worshippers have both glorified them, and gloried in them. But *the Lord will famish all the gods of the earth*, will *starve* them out of their strong-holds: the Pagans had a fond conceit, that their idols were *regaled* by their offerings, and did *eat the fat of their sacrifices*, *Deut. xxxii. 38. Omnia comesta à Belo.* But it is here promised that when the Christian religion is set up in the world, men shall be turned from the service of these dumb idols, shall forsake their altars, and bring no more sacrifices to them, and thus they shall be *famished* or made *lean*, as the word is; their priests shall. This speaks the *vanity* of those idols, it lies in the power of their worshippers to *famish* them; whereas the true God saith, *If I were hungry, I would not tell thee.* It speaks also the *victory* of the God of Israel over them; *Now know we, that he is greater than all gods.* (2.) *Heathen nations* must be *converted*; when the gospel gets ground, by it men shall be brought to *worship him* who lives for ever, (for that is the command of the everlasting gospel, *Rev. xiv. 7.*) *every one from his place*; they shall not need to go up to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel, but wherever they are, they may have access to him; *I will that men pray every where.* God shall be worshipped, not only by all the tribes of Israel, and the strangers who join themselves to them, but by all *the isles of the heathen*; this is a pro-

mise which looks favourably upon our native country, for it is one of the most considerable of the isles of the Gentiles, by which God will be glorified.

12. ¶ Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword. 13. And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria, and will make Nineveh a desolation, *and dry like a wilderness.* 14. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it: *their voice shall sing in the windows, desolation shall be in the thresholds*: for he shall uncover the cedar-work. 15. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, *I am*, and *there is none beside me*: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her, shall hiss, *and wag his hand.*

The cup is *going round*, when Nebuchadnezzar is *going on* conquering and to conquer: and not only Israel's near neighbours, but those that lay more remote, must be reckoned with, for the wrongs they had done to God's people; the Ethiopians and the Assyrians are here taken to task.

1. The Ethiopians or Arabians that had sometimes been a terror to Israel, as in Asa's time, *2 Chron. xiv. 9.* must now be reckoned with. They shall be *slain by my sword*, *ver. 12.* Nebuchadnezzar was *God's sword*, the instrument in his hand, with which these and other enemies were subdued and punished, *Psal. xvii. 14.*

2. The Assyrians, and Nineveh the head city of their monarchy, are next set to the bar, to receive their doom. He that is God's sword, will *stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria*, and make himself master of it. Assyria had been the rod of God's anger against Israel, and now Babylon is the rod of God's anger against Assyria, *Isa. x. 5.* He will *make Nineveh a desolation*, as had been lately and largely foretold, by the prophet Nahum. Observe,

1. How flourishing Nineveh's state had formerly been, *ver. 15. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly.* Nineveh was so *strong* that she feared no *evil*, and therefore *dwelt carelessly*, and set danger at defiance; was so *rich* that she thought herself sure of all *good*, and therefore was a *rejoicing city*, full of mirth and gaiety; and had such a dominion, that she admitted no rival, but said in her heart, *I am*, and *there is none besides me*, that can compare with me; no city in the world that can pretend to be equal with me. God can with his judgments frighten the most secure, humble the most haughty, and mar the mirth of those that most *laugh now.*

2. How compleat Nineveh's ruin shall now be; it shall be made a *desolation*, *ver. 13.* such a heap of ruins shall this once pompous city be, that it shall be, (1.) A receptacle for beasts, such a wilderness, that *flocks shall lie down in it*; nay, such a waste, desolate, frightful place, that wild beasts, the *beasts of the nations*, all kinds of beasts shall take up their abode there; the melancholy birds, as the *cormorant and bittern* shall make their nests in what remains of the houses, as they sometimes do in old ruinous buildings that are uninhabited and unfrequented. The lintels or chapiters of the pillars, the *windows and thresholds*, and all the fine *cedar work* curiously engraven, shall lie exposed; and on them these rueful, ominous birds shall perch, and their *voice shall sing.* How are the songs of mirth turned into hideous, horrid noises! What little reason have men to be proud of stately buildings, and rich furniture, when they know not what all the pomp of them may come to at last. (2.) A derision to travellers. They that had come from far to gratify their curiosity, with the sight of Nineveh's splendor, shall now look on her with as much contempt, as ever they looked upon her with admiration, *ver. 15. Every one that passeth by shall hiss at her, and wag his hand*, making light of her desolations, nay, and making sport with them; there is an end of proud Nineveh. They shall not *weep* and *wring their hands*, their adversities are unpitied and unlamented, that were insolent and haughty in their prosperity, but they shall *hiss and wag their hands*, forgetting that perhaps their own ruin is not far off.

C H A P. III.

We now return to Jerusalem, and must again hear what God has to say to her, (1.) *By way of reproof and threatening*, for the abundance of wickedness that was found in her; of which divers instances are given, with the aggravations of them, *ver. 1-7.* (2.) *By way of promise of mercy and grace*, which God had yet in reserve for them. Two general heads of promises here are, (1.) That God would bring in a glorious work of reformation among

among them, cleanse them from their sins, and bring them home to himself; many promises of this kind here are, ver. 8—13. (2.) That he would bring about a glorious work of salvation for them, when he had thus prepared them for it, ver. 14—20. Thus the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to clear his own way, shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. These promises were to have their full accomplishment in gospel times and gospel graces.

1. **W**O to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city. 2. She obeyed not the voice: she received not correction: she trusted not in the LORD: she drew not near to her God. 3. Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves, they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. 4. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. 5. The just LORD is in the midst thereof: he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not, but the unjust knoweth no shame. 6. I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate, I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. 7. I said, Surely thou wilt fear me: thou wilt receive instruction, so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.

One would wonder that Jerusalem, the holy city, where God was known, and his name was great, should be the city of which this black character is here given; that a place that enjoyed such plenty of the means of grace, should become so very corrupt and vicious, and that God should permit it to be so; yet so it is, to show that the law made nothing perfect; but if this be the true character of Jerusalem, as no doubt it is, for God's judgment will make none worse than they are, it is no wonder that the prophet begins with *wo to her*. For the holy God hates sin in those that are nearest to him, nay, in them he hates it most. A sinful state is, and will be a woful state.

1. Here is a very ill character given of the city in general; how is the faithful city become a harlot! (1.) She *shames* herself; she is *filthy* and *polluted*, has made herself *infamous*, so some read it; ver. 1. the *gluttonous* city, so the margin, always cramming, and making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it. Sin is the filthiness and pollution of persons and places, and makes them odious in the sight of the holy God. (2.) She *wrongs* her neighbours and inhabitants; she is the *oppressing* city; never any place had *statutes and judgments so righteous* as this city had, and yet in the administration of the government, never was more unrighteousness. (3.) She is very *provoking* to her God, and in every respect *walks contrary* to him, ver. 2. He has given his law, and spoken to her by his servants the prophets, telling her what is the good she should do, and what the evil she should avoid, but she *obeyed not his voice*; nor made conscience of doing as he commanded her in any thing. He has taken her under an excellent discipline, both of the word and of the rod, but she *did not receive* the instruction of the one, or the correction of the other; did not submit to God's will, nor answer his end in either: he encouraged her to depend upon him, and his power and promise for deliverance from evil, and supply with good, but she *trusted not in the Lord*; her confidence was placed in her alliances with the nations, more than in her covenant with God: he gave her tokens of his presence, and instituted ordinances of communion for her with himself, but she *drew not near to her God*, did not meet him where he appointed, and where he promised to meet her. She stood at a distance, and *said to the Almighty, Depart*.

2. Here is a very ill character of the leading men in it; those that should by their influence suppress vice and profaneness there, are the great patterns and patrons of it; and those that should be her physicians, are really her worst disease. (1.) Her *princes* are ravenous and barbarous as *roaring lions*, that make a prey of all about them; and are universally feared and hated; they use their power for destruction, and not for edification. (2.) Her *judges* that should be the protectors of injured innocency, are *evening wolves*, rapacious and greedy, and their cruelty and covetousness both insatiable. *They gnaw not the bones till the morrow*; they take so much delight and pleasure in cruelty and oppression, that when they have devoured a good man, they reserve the bones, as it were, for a sweet morsel, to be gnawed the next morning, Job xxxi. 31. (3.) Her *prophets* that pretended to be special messengers from heaven to them, were *light and treacherous persons*, fanciful, and of a vain imagination, frothy and airy, and of a loose conversation, men of no con-

sistency with themselves, nor that one could put any confidence in; they were so given to bantering, that it was hard to say when they were serious. Their pretended prophecies were all a sham, and they secretly laughed at those that were deluded by them. (4.) Her *priests* that were teachers by office, and had the charge of the holy things, were false to their trust, and betrayed it: they were to preserve the purity of the sanctuary, but they did themselves pollute it, and the sacred offices of it, which they were to attend upon; such priests as Hophni and Phineas, that by their wicked lives made the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred. They were to expound and apply the law, and to judge according to it, but in their explications and applications of it, they *did violence to the law*; they corrupted the sense of it, and perverted it to the patronizing of that which was directly contrary to it; by forced constructions, they made the law speak what they pleased, to serve a turn, and so in effect made void the law.

3. We have here the aggravations of this general corruption, of all orders and degrees of men in Jerusalem.

1. They had the tokens of God's presence among them, and all the advantages that could be, of knowing his will, with the strongest inducements possible to do it, and yet they persisted in their disobedience, ver. 5. (1.) They had the honour and privilege of the Shechinah, God's dwelling in their land, so as he dwelt not with any other people. *The just Lord is in the midst of thee*, to take cognizance of all thou doest amiss, and give countenance to all thou doest well: he is in the midst of thee as a *holy God*, and therefore thy pollutions are the more offensive, Deut. xxiii. 14. He is in the midst of thee as a *just God*, and therefore will punish the affronts you put upon him, and the wrongs and injuries you do to one another. (2.) They had God's own example set before them, in the discovery he made of himself to them, that they might conform to it, *he will not do iniquity*, and therefore you should not, for this was the great rule of their institution, *be ye holy, for I am holy*. God will be true to you, be not you then false to him. (3.) He sent to them his prophets, rising up early and sending them, *every morning doth he bring his judgment to light*, as duly as the morning comes, *he faileth not*, he shews them plainly, what the good is he requires of them, and puts them in mind of it; he *wakeneth morning by morning*, Isa. l. 4. wakens his prophets with the rising sun, to bring to light the things which belonged to their peace. So that upon the whole matter, what more could have been done to his vineyard, to make it fruitful! Isa. v. 4. And yet after all, *the unjust knows no shame*, they that have been unjust, are unjust still, and are not ashamed of their unrighteousness, *neither can they blush*. If they had any sense of honour, any shame left in them, they would not go so directly contrary to their profession, and to the instructions given them. But they that are past shame, are past cure.

2. God has set before their eyes some remarkable monuments of his justice, which were designed for warning to them, ver. 6. *I have cut off the nations*, the seven nations of Canaan, which the land spued out for their wickedness; upon which they had this caution given them, to take heed, lest it *spue them out also*, Lev. xviii. 28. Or it may refer to some of the neighbour nations, that were made desolate for their wickedness, especially to the nation of Israel, the ten tribes; their *towers were desolate*, their high towers, their strong towers, their pride and power broken, their *streets wasted*, so that none passed along thro' them; their *cities were destroyed*, and laid in ruins, *no man* was to be found in them, *no inhabitant*, all were slain, or carried into captivity. The enemies did it, but God avows it, *I cut them off*, saith he. And God designed this for an admonition to Jerusalem, Ezek. xxiii. 9, 11. *I said, surely thou wilt fear me*, surely these judgments upon others, will deter thee from the like wicked practices; *surely thou wilt receive instruction* by these providences; it ought reasonably to be expected, that thou wouldest not continue to sin like the nations, when thou seest the ruin which their sin brought upon them. They could not but see their own house in danger, when their neighbours was on fire: and when we are *frightened*, God should be *feared*.

3. He had set before them life and death, good and evil, both in his word and in his providence. (1.) He had assured them of the continuance of their prosperity, if they would *fear him* and *receive instruction*, for so *their dwelling would not be cut off*, as their neighbours was; if they took the warning given them, and reformed, what was past should be pardoned, and their tranquillity lengthened out. (2.) He had made them feel the smart of the rod, tho' he reprieved them from the sword; *howsoever I punished them*, that being chastened they might not be condemned: such various methods did God take with them, to reclaim them, but all in vain, they were not won upon by gentle methods, nor had severe ones any effect, for *they rose early and corrupted all their doings*; they were more resolute and eager in their wicked courses than ever; more studious and solicitous in making provision for their lusts, and let slip no opportunity for the gratification of them. God *rose up early* to send them his prophets to *reduce and reclaim* them, but they were *up before him*, to shut and bolt the door against them. Their wickedness was universal, *all their doings* were corrupted, and it was all along of themselves,

themselves, they could not lay the blame upon the tempter, but they alone must bear it; they themselves wilfully and designedly corrupted all their doings; for every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed.

8. ¶ Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. 9. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent. 10. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed shall bring mine offering. 11. In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain. 12. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. 13. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lyes: neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

Things looked very bad with Jerusalem in the foregoing verses; she is got into a very ill name, and seems to be incurable, incurable, mercy-proof and judgment-proof. Now, one would think it should follow, therefore expect no other, but that she should be utterly abandoned and rejected as *reprobate silver*; since they will not be wrought upon by prophets or providences, let them be made a desolation as their neighbours have been: but behold and wonder at the riches of divine grace, which takes occasion from man's badness, to appear so much the more illustrious. They still grew worse and worse; therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, ver. 8. since the law, it seems, will make nothing perfect, the bringing in of a better hope shall; let those that lament the corruptions of the church, wait upon God, till he send his Son into the world, to save his people from their sins, till he send his gospel to reform and refine his church, and to purify to himself a peculiar people both of Jews and Gentiles. And there were those who according to this direction and encouragement, waited for redemption, for this redemption in Jerusalem, and long looked for came at last, Luke ii. 38. For judgment Christ will come into this world, John ix. 39.

1. To *avenge* what has been done amiss against his church, to bring down and destroy the enemies of it, its spiritual enemies; of which the destruction of Babylon, and other the oppressors of God's people, in the Old Testament times, was a type, and would be a happy preface. He will rise up to the prey, to lead captivity captive, Psal. lxxviii. 18. to conquer and spoil the powers of darkness, and the powers on earth, that set themselves against the Lord and his anointed; he will break them with a rod of iron, Psal. ii. 5, 9.—cx. 5, 6. his determination is to gather the nations, and to assemble the kingdoms. By the gospel of Christ preached to every creature, all nations are summoned, as it were, to appear in a body before the Lord Jesus, who is about to set up his kingdom in the world. But, since the greatest part of mankind will not obey the summons, he will pour upon them his indignation, for he that believes not, is condemned already. At the time of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, there shall be on earth distress of nations with perplexity, Luke xxi. 25. great tribulation, such as never was, or ever shall be, Mat. xxiv. 21. Then God pours upon the nations his indignation, even all his fierce anger, for their indignation and fierce anger against the Messiah and his kingdom. Psal. ii. 1, 2. Then all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of his jealousy, both Jews and Gentiles shall be reckoned with, for their enmity to the gospel. Principalities and powers shall be spoiled, and made a shew of openly, and the victorious Redeemer shall triumph over them. Those that continue to be of the earth, and to mind earthly things, after God has set up the kingdom of heaven among men, their end shall be destruction, Phil. iii. 19. they shall be devoured with the fire of God's jealousy.

2. To amend what he finds amiss in his church. When God intends the restoration of Israel, and the revival of their peace and prosperity, he makes way for it by their reformation, and the revival of their virtue and piety; for this is God's method, both with particular persons and with communities, first to make them holy, and then to make them happy. These promises were in part accomplished, after the return of the Jews out of Babylon, when by their captivity they were thoroughly cured of their idolatry; and this was all the fruit, even the taking away of sin: but it looks farther, to the blessed effects of the gospel, No. lxxvii.

and the grace of it, to those times of reformation we live in, Heb. iii. 10.

1. It is promised that there shall be a reformation in mens discourse, which had been generally corrupt, but should now be with grace seasoned with salt, ver. 9. Then will I turn to the people a pure language, i. e. I will turn the people to such a language, from that evil communication which had almost ruined all good manners among them. Note, Converting grace refines the language, not by making the phrases witty, but the substance wise. Among the Jews after the captivity, there needed a reformation of the dialect, for they had mingled the language of Canaan with that of Ashdod, Neh. xiii. 24. and that grievance shall be redressed. But that is not all; their language shall be purified from all profaneness, filthiness and falsehood. I will turn to them a choice language; so some read it; they shall not speak rashly, but with caution and deliberation: they shall choose out their words. Note, An air of purity and piety in common conversation, is a very happy omen to any people; other graces, other blessings, shall be given where God gives a pure language, to those that have been a people of unclean lips.

2. That the worship of God according to his will, shall be more closely applied to, and more unanimously concurred in: instead of sacrifice and incense, they shall call upon the name of the Lord; prayer is the spiritual offering with which God must be honoured: and to prepare and fit us for that duty, it is necessary that we have a pure language. We are utterly unfit to take God's name into our lips, unless they be pure lips. The purifying of the language in common conversation, is necessary to the acceptableness of the words of our mouth, and the meditation of our heart in our devotion; for how can sweet waters and bitter come out of the same fountain? Jam. iii. 9, 10, 11, 12. It is likewise promised that their language being thus purified, they shall serve God with one consent: with one shoulder, so the word is; alluding to oxen in the yoke, that draw even: when Christians are unanimous in the service of God, the work goes on cheerfully. This is the effect of the pure language, purified from passion, envy, and censoriousness. Note, Purity is the way to unity; the reformation of manners the way to a comprehension; the wisdom from above, is first pure, then peaceable.

3. That those that were driven from God, should return to him, and be accepted of him, ver. 10. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia; i. e. from Egypt, so described, Isa. lviii. 1. or from some other very remote country, my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering. Those that by reason of their distance had almost forgotten God, and their obligations to him, shall be put in mind of him, as the prodigal son was of his father's house, in the far country. Those that by reason of their dispersion under the tokens of his displeasure, might be afraid of coming to him, yet even they shall be gathered under his wings: the daughter of his dispersed that is afar off, will be found among those whom the Lord our God shall call; and tho' they are dispersed, he will own them for his; his calling them my dispersed, puts honour upon them, sufficient to balance all the disgrace of their dispersion. These shall come, (1.) With their humble petitions; they are my suppliants. Note, True converts are suppliants to God; they do not plead, but make supplication to their judge, Job ix. 15. and wherever they are, tho' beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, a great way off from his house of prayer, he has his eye upon them, and his ear open to them, they are his suppliants. (2.) With their spiritual sacrifices, they shall bring mine offering; shall bring themselves as spiritual sacrifices to God; Rom. xii. 1. The conversion of the Gentiles, is called the offering up of the Gentiles, Rom. xv. 16. and with themselves, they shall bring the gospel sacrifices, of prayer, and praise, and alms, with which God is well pleased.

4. That sin and sinners shall be purged out from among them, ver. 11. God will take away, (1.) Their just reproach, in that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings. They shall be ashamed as penitents, and shall continue to be so, see Ezek. xvi. 63. but they shall not be ashamed as sinners that return to folly again. Thou shalt not be ashamed, i. e. thou shalt no more do a shameful thing; as thou hast done. The guilt of sin being taken away by pardoning mercy, the reproach of it shall be rolled away from the sinner's own conscience, that being purified, and pacified and cleansed from dead works. When wickedness and wicked people abound in a nation, those few in it that are good, are ashamed of them, and of their land; but when sinners are converted, and the land reformed, that shame and the cause of it are removed. (2.) Their unjust glorying. I will take away out of the midst of thee, not only the profane that are a shame to thy land, but the hypocrites that appear beautiful outwardly, and rejoice in thy pride, in the holy city, the holy house; these were indeed Israel's glory, but they made them their pride and rejoiced in them, as if they were an invincible bulwark to secure them in their sinful ways; they relied on them as their righteousness and strength, boasting of the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, Jer. vii. 4. they were haughty because of the holy mountain; were conceited of themselves, scornful of others, and set even the judgments of God at defiance. Note, Church privileges when they are not duly improved as they ought to be, are often made

the matter of mans pride, and the ground of their security. But that *haughtiness* is of all other the most offensive to God, which is supported and fed by the pretensions of holiness. This God will *silence* and take away.

5. That God will have a remnant of holy, humble, serious people among them, that shall have the comfort of their relation to him, and interest in him, *ver. 12. I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people.* When the Chaldeans carried away the Jews into captivity, they left of the poor of the land for wine-dressers and husband-men, a type and figure of God's distinguished remnant; whom he sets apart for himself, they are *afflicted and poor*; low in the world such God hath chosen, *Jam. ii. 5.* The poor are evangelized, low in their own eyes, afflicted for sin, poor in spirit. They are God's leaving, for it is a remnant according to the election of grace: *I have reserved them myself*, saith God, *Rom. xi. 45.* and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. Note, Those whom God designs for the glory of his name, he enables to trust in his name. And the greater their affliction and poverty in the world is, the more reason they see to trust in God, having nothing else to trust to, *1 Tim. v. 5.*

6. That this select remnant shall be blessed with purity and peace, *ver. 13.* (1.) They shall be blessed with *purity*, both in words and actions; they shall neither *do iniquity, nor speak lies.* Justice and veracity shall command them and govern them, tho' it be never so much against their secular interest. They shall not only not speak a direct, deliberate lye, but *there shall not be a deceitful tongue found in their mouth*, not in the mouth of any of them; not the least equivocation shall come from them. (2.) They shall be blessed with *peace.* They shall as the sheep of God's pasture, *feed and lie down*, and none shall make them afraid. They shall not be fearful themselves, nor shall any about them be frightful to them. Note, Those that are careful not to *do iniquity*, need not be afraid of any calamity, for it cannot hurt them, and therefore should not terrify them.

14. ¶ Sing, O daughter of Zion, shout, O Israel, be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. 15. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, *even the LORD is in the midst of thee*: thou shalt not see evil any more. 16. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. 17. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. 18. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burthen. 19. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee, and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out, and I will get them praise and fame in every land, where they have been put to shame. 20. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name, and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.

After the promises of taking away of sin, here follows promises of the taking away of trouble; for when the cause is removed, the effect will cease. What makes a people *holy*, will make them *happy* of course. The precious promises here made to the purified people, were to have their full accomplishments in the comforts of the gospel. In the hope, and much more in the enjoyment of which, they are here called upon, (1.) To rejoice and sing, *ver. 14, Sing, O daughter of Zion; sing for joy, shout, O Israel,* in a holy transport and exultation, *Be glad and rejoice with all the heart*; let the joy be inward, let it be great; those that love God *with all their heart*, have occasion with all their heart to rejoice in him. It was promised, *ver. 13.* that their sins should be mortified, and these fears silenced, and then follows, *sing and rejoice.* Note, Those that reform have cause to rejoice; whereas Israel cannot rejoice for joy as other people, while she goes a whoring from her God. God's promises applied by faith, furnish the saints with constant and abundant matter for joy; they are filled with joy and peace in believing them. (2.) To throw off all their discouragements, *ver. 16.* In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, God will say it, by his prophets, by his providences, their neighbours shall say it, they shall say it to one another, *Fear thou not*, be not disposed to fear, do not easily admit the impressions of it, when things are bad fear not their being worse, but hope they will mend; frighten not thyself upon every occasion. Let not their hands be slack or faint; wring not thy hands in despair, drop not thy hands in despondency, disfit not thyself for thy work and warfare, by giving way to doubts and fears. Pluck up thy spirits, and in token of that,

lift up thy hands, the *hands that hung down*, *Heb. xii. 12. Isa. xxxv. 3.* Lift up thy hands in prayer to God, lift up thy hands to help thyself. Fear makes the hands slack, but faith and hope make them vigorous, and the joy of the land will be our strength both for doing and suffering.

Let us now see what these precious promises are, which are here made to the people of God, for the banishing of their griefs and fears, and the encouraging of their hopes and joys, and to us are these promises made as well as to them.

1. An end shall be put to all their troubles and distresses, *ver. 15. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments*; hath removed all the calamities thou hast been groaning under, which were the punishments of thy sin; the noise of war shall be silenced, the reproach of famine done away, and the captivity brought back. Though some grievances remain, they shall be only afflictions and not judgments, for sin shall be pardoned. *He hath cast out thine enemy*, that has thrust himself into thy land, and triumphed over thee. He hath swept out thine enemy, so some read it, as dirt is swept out of the house to the dunghil. When they sweep out their sins with the besom of reformation, God will sweep out their enemies with the besom of destruction. If they should need correction, they shall fall into the hands of the Lord, whose mercies are great, and shall not again fall into the hands of man, whose tender mercies are cruel. *Thou shalt not see evil any more*, not such evil days as thou hast seen. Note, The way to get clear of the evil of trouble, is to keep clear from the evil of sin; and to them that do so trouble has no real evil in it.

2. God will give them the tokens of his presence with them; though he has long seemed to stand at a distance, they having provoked him to withdraw, he will make it to appear that he is with them of a truth. *The Lord is in the midst of thee, O Zion, of thee, O Jerusalem*, as the sun in the center of the universe, to diffuse his light and influence upon every part. He is in the midst of thee to preside in all thine affairs, and to take care of all thine interests. And, (1.) He is the King of Israel, *ver. 15.* and is in the midst of thee as a king in the midst of his people. With an eye to this our Lord Jesus is called the King of Israel, *John i. 49.* and he is, and will be in the midst of his church, always, even to the end of the world, to receive the homage of his subjects, and to give out his favours to them, even where but two or three are gathered together in his name. (2.) He is the Lord thy God, thine in covenant, and he is in the midst of thee as thy God, whom thou hast an interest in, and whose own thou art. He has put himself into dear relations to thee, laid himself by promise under obligations to thee, and that thou mayst have abundant comfort in both, he is in the midst of thee nigh at hand to answer both. (3.) He that is in the midst of thee as thy God and King is mighty, is almighty, is able to do all that for thee that thou needest, and canst desire. (4.) He has engaged his power for thy succour; *He will save; He will be Jesus*; will answer the name, for he will save his people from their sins.

3. God will take delight in them, and in doing them good. The expressions of this are very lively and affecting, *ver. 17. He will rejoice over thee with joy*, will not only be well pleased with thee, upon thy repentance and reformation, and take thee into favour, but will take a complacency in thee, as the bridegroom doth in his bride, or the bride in her ornaments, *Isa. lxii. 3, 5.* The conversion of sinners and the consolation of saints, is the joy of angels, for it is the joy of God himself. The church should be the joy of the whole earth, (*Psal. xlviii. 2.*) for it is the joy of the whole heaven. He will rest in his love; will be silent in his love; so the word is: Will not rebuke thee as I have done, for thy sins; will acquiesce in thee, and in my relation to thee. I know not where there is the like expression of Christ's love to his church, unless in that song of songs, *Cant. iv. 5. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of thine eyes.* O the condescensions of divine grace; the great God not only loves his saints, but he loves to love them; is pleased that he has pitched upon these objects of his love. He will joy over them with singing. He that is grieved for the sin of sinners, rejoiceth in the graces and services of the saints, and is ready to express that joy, by singing over them. *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him*, and in them Jesus Christ will shortly be glorified and admired.

4. God will comfort Zion's mourners, that sympathize with her in her griefs, and will wipe away their tears, *ver. 18. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies, to whom the reproach of it was a burthen.* See (1.) Who they are whom God will rejoice in, and make to rejoice: They are such as are sorrowful. They only must expect to reap in joy, that sow in tears. The sorrowful now, shall be for ever joyful. (2.) What is the great matter of sorrow to Zion's mourners, when Zion is in mourning. Many are her calamities, the city is ruined, the palaces demolished; trade is at an end, and the administration of publick justice; but all these are nothing to them, in comparison with the desolations of the sanctuary, the destruction of the temple and the altar; to attend on which, in solemn feasts, all Israel used to come together three times a year: It is for those sacred solemn assemblies that they are sorrowful. (1.) Because they are dispersed; there is no temple to come up to, or if there were,

were, no people to come up to it; so that the *solemn feasts and sabbaths are forgotten in Zion*, Lam. ii. 6. Note, The restraining of publick assemblies for religious worship, the scattering of them by their enemies, or the forsaking of them by their friends; so that either there are no assemblies or not solemn ones, is a very *sorrowful* thing to all good people. If the *ways of Zion mourn*, the sons of Zion mourn too. And hereby they make it to appear, that they are indeed of Zion, living members of that body, with the grievances of which, they are so sensibly affected. (2.) Because they are *despised*; the reproach of the *solemn assemblies* is a burthen to them. It had been the lot of the *solemn assemblies*, to lie under a great deal of reproach, Satan and his instruments having a particular spite at them, as the great support of the interest of God's kingdom among men: Black and odious characters have been put upon those assemblies; and this is a burthen to all those that have a cordial concern for the glory of God, and the welfare of the souls of men. They reckon, that the reproaches of those who reproach the solemn assemblies, fall upon them, fall foul upon them.

5. God will recover the captives out of the hands of their oppressors, and bring home the banished that seemed to be expelled, *ver. 19, 20.* (1.) Their enemies shall be *disabled* to detain them in bondage. *At that time I will undo all that afflict thee*, will break their power, and blast their counsels, so that they shall be forced to surrender the prey they have taken, *Conficiam*. I will take them to task, I will be doing with them shortly, and so as to *make an end* of them. Note, Those that abuse and oppress God's people, take the ready way to undo themselves. (2.) They shall be *enabled* to *assert* and *recover* their liberty, and all the difficulties in the way of it, shall be surmounted. Is the church weak, and wounded? *I will save her that halteth*, as was promised, *Mic. iv. 7.* He will help her, when she cannot help herself; even *the lame shall take the prey*, Isa. xxxiii. 23. Is she dispersed, and not likely to incorporate for her common benefit? *I will gather her that was driven out. and bring her again, at the time that I gather her*; one act of mercy and grace

shall serve, both to collect them out of their dispersions, and conduct them to their own land, When the *peoples hearts are prepared*, the work will be *done suddenly*; and who can hinder it, if God undertake to effect it? *I will turn back your captivity before your eye, saith the Lord*, you shall plainly discern the hand of God in it, and say, *This is the Lord's doing*.

6. God will by all this put honour upon them, and gain them respect from all about them. Israel was at first *made high above all nations in praise and fame*, Deut. xxvi. 19. The reproach brought upon them was therefore one of the *forest* of their grievances, nothing cuts deeper to those that are in honour, than disgrace doth; and therefore when God returns in mercy to his church, it is here promised, that she shall regain her credit; all the reproach shall be for ever rolled away as Israel's at Gilgal, *Josh. v. 9.* The church shall be as honourable, as ever she has been despicable. (1.) Even those that have *reproached* her, shall be made to *respect* her. *I will get them praise and fame in every land, where they have been put to shame*; that the same who were the witnesses of their disgrace, may see cause to change their mind concerning them. They that said, *This is Zion*, whom no man looketh after, shall say, *this is Zion*, whom the great God looks after: And she that was looked upon to be *the off-scouring of the earth*, now appears to be *the darling of heaven*. (2.) Even those that never *knew her*, shall be brought to honour her, *ver. 20.* *I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth*; so the Jewish church was, when the *fear of the Jews* fell upon their neighbours, *Esth. viii. 17.* and some of all nations said, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*, *Zech. viii. 23.* So the Christian church was, when it was made to flourish in the world, for there is that in it, which may justly recommend it to the value and esteem of all the people of the earth: And so the universal church of the first-born will be in the great day; when the saints shall be brought together to Christ, that he may be admired and glorified in them, and they admired and glorified in him, before angels and men. Then will God's Israel be *made a name and a praise* to eternity.



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P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S

O F T H E

P r o p h e c y o f H A G G A I.

The captivity in Babylon gave a very remarkable turn to the affairs of the Jewish church, both in history and prophecy. It is made a signal epocha in our Saviour's genealogy, Matth. i. 17. Nine of the twelve minor prophets, whose oracles we have been hitherto consulting, lived and preached before that captivity, and most of them had an eye to it in their prophecies, foretelling it as the just punishment of Jerusalem's wickedness. But the three last (in whom the Spirit of prophecy took its period, until it revived in Christ's fore-runner) lived and preached after the return out of captivity; not immediately upon it, but some time after. Haggai and Zechariah appeared much about the same time, eighteen years after the return, when the building of the temple, was both retarded by its enemies, and neglected by its friends. Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them, so we read Ezra v. 1. to reprove them for their remissness, and to encourage them to revive that good work, when it had stood still for some time, and to go on with it vigorously, notwithstanding the opposition they met with in it. Haggai began two months before Zechariah, who was raised up to second him, that out of the mouth of two witnesses the word might be established: But Zechariah continued longer at the work; for all Haggai's prophecies that are recorded, were delivered within four months, in the second year of Darius, between the beginning of the sixth month, and the end of the ninth: But we have Zechariah's prophecies dated above two years after, Zech. vii. 1. some have the honour to lead, others to last, in the work of God. The Jews ascribe to these two prophets, the honour of being members of the Great Synagogue (as they call it) which was formed after the return out of captivity; we think it more certain, and it was their honour, and a much greater honour, that they prophesied of Christ. Haggai spoke of him as the glory of the latter house, and Zechariah as the man the Branch: In them the light of that morning star shone more bright, than in the foregoing prophecies, as they lived nearer the time of the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and now began to see his day approaching. The LXX make Haggai and Zechariah to be the penmen of psalm cxxxviii. and of psalm cxlvi, cxlvii, and cxlviii.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter, after the preamble of the prophecy, we have, (1.) A reproof of the people of the Jews for their dilatoriness and slothfulness in building the temple, which had provoked God to contend with them, by the judgment of famine and scarcity; with an exhortation to them, to resume that good work, and to prosecute it in good earnest, ver. 1—11. (2.) The good success of this sermon, appearing in the peoples return and close application to that work, wherein the prophet in God's name, animated and encouraged them, assuring them that God was with them, ver. 12—15.

1. **I**N the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech the high priest, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built. 3. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4. Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? 5. Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider

sider your ways. 6. Ye have sown much, and bring in little : ye eat, but ye have not enough : ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink : ye clothe you, but there is none warm : and he that earneth wages, earneth wages *to put it into a bag with holes.* 7. ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider your ways. 8. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house ; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. 9. Ye looked for much, and lo it came to little : and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it : why ? saith the LORD of hosts, because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. 10. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. 11. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon *that* which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

It was the complaint of the Jews in Babylon, that they *saw not their signs*, and there was *no more any prophet*, Psal. lxxiv. 9. which was a just judgment upon them, for mocking and misusing the prophets : We read of no prophets they had in their return, as there were in their coming out of Egypt, *Hof. xii. 13.* God stirred them up immediately by his Spirit, to exert themselves in that escape, *Ezra i. 5.* for though God makes use of prophets, he needs them not, he can do his work without them. But the lamp of Old Testament prophecy shall yet make some bright and glorious efforts before it expire, and Haggai is the first that appears under the character of a spiritual messenger from heaven, when the *word of the Lord* had been long *precious* (as when prophecy began, *1 Sam. iii. 1.*) and *there had been no open vision.* In the reign of Darius Hystaspis, the third of the Persian kings, in the second year of his reign, this prophet was sent ; and the word of the Lord came to him, and came *by him*, to the leading men among the Jews ; who are here named, *ver. 1.* The chief governor, (1.) *In the state* ; that was Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, of the house of David, who was commander in chief of the Jews, in their return out of captivity. (2.) *In the church* ; and that was *Joshua the son of Josedech*, who was now *high-priest*. They were great men, and good men, and yet were to be stirred up to their duty, when they grew remiss. What the people also were faulty in they must be told of, that they might use their power and interest for the mending of it. The prophets were extraordinary messengers, did not go about to set aside the ordinary institutions of magistracy and ministry, but endeavoured to render both more effectual, for the ends to which they were appointed, for both ought to be supported. Now observe,

1. What the sin of the Jews was at this time, *ver. 2.* As soon as they came up out of captivity, they set up an altar for sacrifice, and within a year after laid the foundations of a temple, *Ezra iii. 10.* they then seemed very forward in it, and it was likely enough that the work would be done suddenly ; but being served with a prohibition, some time after from the Persian court, and charged not to go on with it, they not only yielded to the force, when they were actually under it, which might be excused, but afterwards, when the violence of the opposition was abated, they continued very indifferent to it, had no spirit or courage to set about it again, but seemed glad they had a pretence to let it stand still. Though they who are employed for God may be *driven off* from their work by a storm, yet they must return to it, as soon as the storm is over : These here did not so, but continued loitering, until they were afresh minded of their duty. And that which they suggested one to another, was, *The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built*, i. e. (1.) *Our time* is not come for the doing of it, because we have not yet got up our backs after our captivity, our losses are not repaired, nor have we yet got before hand in the world ; it is too great an undertaking for new beginners in the world, as we are, let us first get our own houses up, before we talk of building churches ; and in the mean time let a bare altar serve us, as it did our father Abraham. They did not say, they would not build a temple at all, but not yet ; it is all in good time. Note, Many a good work is *put by*, by being *put off*, as Felix put off the prosecution of his convictions to a more convenient season. They do not say they will never repent, and reform, and be religious, but not yet : And so the great business we were sent into the world to do, is *not done*, under pretence it is all in good time to go about it. (2.) *God's time* is not come for the doing of it ; for (say they) the restraint laid upon us by authority in a legal way, is not broken off, and therefore we ought not to proceed, though there be a present connivance of authority. Note, There is an aptness in us to misinterpret providential discouragements in our duty, as if they amounted to a discharge from our duty, when they are only intended for the trial and exercise of

our courage and faith. It is bad to neglect our duty, but it is worse to vouch providence for the patronizing of our neglects.

2. What the judgments of God were, by which they were punished for this neglect, *ver. 6, 9, 10, 11.* They neglected the building of God's house, and put that off, that they might have time and money for their secular affairs. They desired to be excused from such an expensive piece of work, under this pretence, that they must provide for their families ; their children must have *meat* and *portions* too, and until they have got *before-hand* in the world, they cannot think of rebuilding the temple. Now, that the punishment might answer the sin, God by his providence kept them still *behind-hand* : And that poverty which they thought to prevent by not building the temple, God brought upon them for not building it. They were sensible of the *smart* of the judgments, and every one complained of the unseasonable weather, and the great losses they sustained in their corn and cattle, and the decay of trade ; but they were not sensible of the *cause* of the judgment, and the ground of God's controversy with them ; they did not, or would not see and own, that it was for their putting off the building of the temple, that they lay under these manifest tokens of God's displeasure ; and therefore God here gives them notice, that this was it for which he contended with them. Note, We need the help of God's prophets and ministers, to expound to us, not only the judgments of God's mouth, but the judgments of his hands, that we may understand his mind and meaning, in his rod as well as his word ; to discover to us, not only wherein we have offended God, but wherein God shews himself offended at us. Let us observe, (1.) *How God contended with them.* He did not send them into captivity again, nor bring a foreign enemy upon them, as they deserved, but took the correcting of them into his own hands, for his mercies are great. (1.) He that *giveth seed to the sower*, denied his blessing upon the *seed sown*, and then it never prospered, they had nothing, or next nothing from it. *They sowed much*, *ver. 6.* kept a deal of ground in tillage, which they might expect, would turn to a better advantage than usual, because their land had long lain fallow, and had *enjoyed its sabbaths*. Having *sowed much*, they *looked for much* from it, enough to *spend*, and enough to *spare* too, but were disappointed ; they *bring in little*, very little, *ver. 6.* however, when they have made the utmost of it, *it comes to little*, *ver. 9.* it did not yield as they expected, *Isa. v. 10.* *The seed of an homer, shall yield an ephah*, a bushel's sowing shall yield a peck. Note, Our expectations from the creature are oftentimes most frustrated, when they are most raised ; and then, when we look for much, it *comes to little*, that our expectation may be from God only, in whom it will be *out-done*. We are here told, how they came to be disappointed, *ver. 10.* *The heaven over you is staid from dew* ; he that has the key of the clouds in his hands, shut them up, and with-held the rain when the ground called for it ; the former or the latter rain, and then of course *the earth is staid from her fruit* ; for if the heaven be as brass, the sea is as iron. The corn perhaps came up very well, and promised a very plentiful crop, but for want of the dews at earing-time, it never filled, but was parched with the heat of the sun, and withered away. The restored captives that had long been kept bare in Babylon, thought they should never want, when they had got their own land in possession again, and had that at command : But what the better are they for it, unless they had the clouds at command too ? God will make us sensible of our necessary and constant dependence upon him, throughout all the links in the chain of second causes, from first to last ; so that we can at no time say, Now we have no farther occasion for God and his providence. See *Hof. ii. 21.* But God not only with-held the cooling rains, but he appointed the scorching heats, *ver. 11.* *I called for a drought upon the land*, ordered the weather to be extremely *hot*, and then the fruits of the earth were burnt up. See how every creature is that to us, that God makes it to be, either comfortable or afflictive, serving us or incommoding us : nothing among the inferior creatures is so necessary and beneficial to the world as the heat of the sun, that is it that puts life into the plants, and *renews the face of the earth* at spring : And yet, if that go into an extreme, it undoes all again. Our Creator is our best friend, but if we make him our enemy, we make the best friends we have among the creatures our enemies too. This drought God *calls for*, and it came at the call ; as the winds and the waves, so the rays of the sun obey him. It was universal, and the ill effects of it general ; it was a drought *upon the mountains*, which lying high, were first affected with it ; the *mountains* were their *pasture-grounds*, and used to be *covered over with flocks*, but now there is no grass for them : It was *upon the corn, the new wine, and the oil*, all failed through the extremity of the hot weather, even *all that the ground brought forth*, it was all withered : Nay, it had an ill influence *upon men* ; the hot weather *enfeebled* some, and made them weary and fainty, and spent their spirits ; it *enflamed* others, and put them into fevers. It should seem it brought diseases *upon cattle* too. In short, it spoiled *all the labour of their hands* which they hoped to *eat of*, and maintain their families by. Note, *Meat for the belly is meat that perisheth*, and if we labour for that only, we are in danger of losing our labour ; but are sure our labour *shall not be in vain in the Lord*, if we labour

for the meat which endures to eternal life: For the hand of the diligent, in the business of religion, will infallibly make rich, whereas in the business of this life, the most solicitous, and the most industrious, often loose the labour of their hands. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. (2.) He that giveth bread to the eater, denied his blessing upon the bread they eat, and then that did not nourish them. The cause of the withering and failing of the corn in the field was visible, it was for want of rain; but besides that, there was a secret blast and curse attending that which they brought home. (1.) When they had it in the barn, they were not sure of it: *I will blow upon it saith the Lord of hosts*, ver. 9. and that withered it, as buds are sometimes blasted in the spring by a nipping frost, which we see the effects of, but know not the way of. *I did blow it away*, so the margin reads it. When men have heaped wealth together, God can scatter it with the breath of his mouth, as easily as we can blow away a feather. Note, We can never be sure of any thing in this world, it is exposed not only when it is in the field, but when it is housed; for there moth and rust corrupt, Matt. vi. 19. And if we would have the comfort and continuance of our temporal enjoyments, we must make God our friend, for if he bless them to us, they are blessings indeed; but if he blow upon them, we can expect no good from them, they make themselves wings and fly away. (2.) When thy had it upon the board, it was not that to them that they expected. *Ye eat, but ye have not enough*, either because the meat is washy and not satisfying, or because the stomach is greedy and not satisfied; you eat, but you have no good digestion, and so are not nourished by it, nor doth it answer the end, or you have not enough, because you are not content, nor think it enough. *Ye drink*, but are not cooled and refreshed by it, *you are not filled with drink*; you are stinted and have not enough to quench your thirst. The new wine is cut off from your mouths, Joel i. 5. nay, and you drink your water too by measure, and with astonishment; you have no comfort of it, because you have no plenty of it, but are still in fear of falling short. (3.) That which they had upon their backs did them no good there; *ye clothe you, but there is none warm*, your clothes soon wear out, and wax old, and grow thin, because God blows upon them, contrary to what Israel's did in the wilderness, when God blessed them. It is God that makes our garments warm upon us, when he quieteth the earth, Job xxxvii. 17. (4.) That which they had in their bags, which was not laid out, but laid up, yet they were not sure of it; he that earns wages by hard labour, and has it paid him in ready current money, yet puts it into a bag with holes, it drops through and wastes away insensibly. Every thing is so scarce and dear, that they spend their money as fast as they get it. Those that lay up their treasure on earth, put it into a bag with holes, they lose it as they go along, and they that come after them pick it up: But if we lay up our treasure in heaven, we provide for our selves bags that wax not old, Luke xvii. 33.

(2.) Observe wherefore God thus contended with them, and stopped the current of those favours promised them at their return, (Joel ii. 24.) they provoked him to do it; *It is because of my house that is waste*. That is the quarrel God has with them; the foundation of the temple is laid, but the building doth not go on. Every man runs to his own house to finish that, and to make that convenient and fine, and no care is taken about the Lord's house, and therefore it is that God crosseth you thus in all your affairs, to testify his displeasure against you for that neglect, and to bring you to a sense of your sin and folly. Note, As those that seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, shall not only find them, but are most likely to have other things added to them, so they who neglect and postpone those things, will not only lose them, but will justly have other things taken away from them. And if God cross us in our temporal affairs, and we meet with trouble and disappointment, we shall find this is the cause of it; the work we have to do for God and our own souls is left undone, and we seek our own things more than the things of Jesus Christ, Phil. ii. 21.

3. The reproof which the prophet gives them for their neglect of the temple-work, ver. 4. *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses*, to have them beautified and adorned, and your families settled in them? They were not content with walls and roofs for necessity, but they must have for gaiety and fancy; it is high time, saith one, that my house was wainscotted, and high time, saith another, that mine were painted; and God's house all this time lies waste, and nothing is done at it. What, saith the prophet, Is it time you should have your humour pleased, and not time you should have your God pleased? How was their disposition the reverse of David's, who could not be easy in his house of cedar, while the ark of God was in curtains, 2 Sam. vii. 2. and of Solomon, who built the temple of God before he built a palace for himself. Note, Those are very much strangers to their own interest that prefer the conveniences and ornaments of the temporal life before the absolute necessities of the spiritual life, that are full of care to enrich their own houses, while God's temple in their hearts lies waste, and nothing is done for it or in it.

4. The good counsel which the prophet gives to them who thus despised God, and whom God was therefore justly displeased with.

1. He would have them reflect. Now therefore consider your ways, ver. 5. and again, ver. 7. Be sensible of the hand of God gone out against you, and enquire into the reason; think what you have done that has provoked God thus to break in upon your comforts; and think what you will do to testify your repentance, that God may return in mercy to you. Note, It is the great concern of every one of us, to consider our ways; to set our hearts to our ways, so the word is, to think on my ways, Psal. cxix. 59. to search and try them, Lam. iii. 40. to ponder the path of our feet, Prov. iv. 26. to apply our minds with all seriousness, to the great and necessary duty of self-examination, and communing with our own hearts concerning our spiritual state, our sins that are past, and our duty for the future, for sin is what we must answer for, duty is what we must do, about these therefore we must be inquisitive, rather than about events, which we must leave to God. Many are quick sighted to pry into other peoples ways, that are very careless of their own; whereas our concern is to prove every one his own work, Gal. vi. 4.

2. He would have them reform, ver. 8. Go up to the mountain, to Lebanon, and bring wood, and other materials that are wanting, and build the house with all speed, put it off no longer, but set to it in good earnest. Note, Our considering of our ways must issue in the amending of what ever we find amiss in them. If any duty has been long neglected, that is not a reason why it should still be so, but why now at length it should be revived; better late than never. And for their encouragement to apply themselves in good earnest to this work, he assures them, (1.) That they should be accepted of him in it. *Build the house, and I will take pleasure in it*; and that was encouragement enough to apply themselves to it with alacrity and resolution, and to go thorough with it what ever it cost them. Note, Whatever God will take pleasure in when it is done, we ought to take pleasure in the doing of, and to reckon that inducement enough to set about it, and go on with it in good earnest; for what greater satisfaction can we have in our own bosoms, than in contributing any thing towards that which God will take pleasure in? It ought to have been the top of our ambition to be accepted of the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 9. Tho' they had foolishly neglected the house of God, yet, if at length they will resume the care of it, God will not remember against them their former neglects, but will take pleasure in the work of their hands. Those that have long deferred their return to God, if at length they return with all their heart, must not despair of his favour. (2.) That he would be honoured by them in it. *I will be glorified saith the Lord*. He will be served and worshipped in the temple, when it is built, and sanctified in them that come nigh to him. It is worth while to bestow all possible care, and pains, and cost, upon that, by which God may be glorified.

12. ¶ Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son Josedech the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, (as the LORD their God had sent him) and the people did fear before the LORD. 13. Then spake Haggai the LORDs messenger in the LORDs message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD. 14. And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people, and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts their God: 15. In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

As an ear-ring of gold (saith Solomon) and an ornament of fine gold, so amiable, so acceptable in the sight of God and man, is a wise reprovener upon an obedient ear, Prov. xxv. 12. The prophet here was a wise but faithful reprovener in God's name, and he met with an obedient ear. The foregoing sermon met with the desired success among the people, and that met with due encouragement from God. Observe,

1. How the people returned to God in a way of duty. All those to whom that sermon was preached, received the word in the love of it, and were wrought upon by it. Zerubbabel the chief governor, did not think himself above the check and command of God's word, he was a man that had been eminently useful in his day, and serviceable to the interest of the church, yet did not plead his former merits in answer to this reproof for his present remissness, but submitted to it. Joshua's business as high priest was to teach, and yet he was willing himself to be taught, and willingly received admonition and instruction. The remnant of the people (and the whole body of them was but a remnant, a very few of the many thousands of Israel) they also were very pliable, they all obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and bowed their neck to the yoke of his commands, and it is here

here recorded to their honour, *ver. 12.* Their father said, *Sons, go work to day in my vineyard,* in my temple, and they not only say we go, fir, but they went immediately.

(1.) They looked upon the prophet to be *the Lord's messenger*, and the word he delivered to be *the Lord's message* to them; and therefore received it, *not as the word of man, but as the word of Almighty God*; they obeyed his words, *as the Lord their God had sent him*, *ver. 12.* Note, In attending to God's ministers we must have an eye to him that sent them, and receive them for his sake, while they act according to their commission.

(2.) They did *fear before the Lord*. Prophecy was a new thing with them, they had had no special messenger from heaven of a great while, and therefore now they had one, and but one, they paid an extraordinary regard to him, whereas their fathers, that had many prophets, mocked and misused them. It is some times so, when good preaching is most scarce, it does most good, whereas the manna that is rained in plenty is loathed as *light bread*. And because they so readily received this prophet, within a month or two after, God raised them up another, *Zech. i. 1.* They *feared before the Lord*, i. e. they had a great regard to the divine authority, and a great dread of the divine wrath, and were of those that *trembled at God's word*. The judgments of God they had been under, tho' very severe, had not prevailed to make them *fear before the Lord*, until the word of God was sent to expound his providences, and then *they feared*; then when they saw their own sin the cause of those judgments, then they *feared*. Note, A holy fear of God will have a great influence upon our obedience to him. *Serve the Lord with fear, if we fear him not we shall not serve him.*

(3.) *The Lord stirred up their spirits*, *ver. 14.* (1.) He *excited* them to their duty, and put it into their hearts to go about it. Note, Then the word of God has its success, when God by his grace *stirs up our spirits* to comply with it; and without that grace we should remain stupid, and utterly averse to every thing that is good. It is in the day of a divine power that we are *made willing*. (2.) He *encouraged* them in their duty, and with those encouragements enlarged their hearts, *Psal. cxix. 32.* When they heard the word they *feared*, but lest they should sink under the weight of that fear, God *stirred them up*, and made them chearful and bold to encounter the difficulties they might meet with. Note, When God has work to do, he will either find or make men fit to do it, and stir them up to it.

(4.) They applied themselves to their work with all possible vigour, *They came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts their God*; every one according as his capacity or ability was, lent a hand some way or other to further that good work, and this they did with an eye to God as the *Lord of hosts*, and as *their God*, the God of Israel. The consideration of God's sovereign dominion in the world by his providence, and his covenant relation to his people by his grace, should stir up our spirits to act for him, and for the advancement of the interest of his kingdom among men, to the utmost of our power.

(5.) They did this speedily; it was but on the first day of the sixth month, that Haggai preached them this sermon; and by the *twenty-fourth of the same month*, little more than three weeks after, they were all busy working in the house of the Lord their God, *ver. 15.* To shew that they were ashamed of their delays hitherto, now they were convinced and called, they were resolved to delay no longer, but strike while the iron was hot; and set about the work while they were under convictions. Note, Those that have *lost time*, have need to *redeem time*, and the longer we have loitered in that which is good, when we are convinced of our folly, the more haste we should make.

2. How God *met them* in a way of *mercy*. The same prophet that brought them the reproof, brought them a very comforting, encouraging word, *ver. 13.* Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message, in his name, and as from him, saying, *I am with you, saith the Lord*. That is all he has to say, and that is enough, as that word of Christ to his disciples is, *Mat. xxviii. 20.* *Lo I am with you alway even to the end of the world.* *I am with you*, i. e. I will forgive your neglects hitherto, and they shall not be remembered against you, I will remove the judgments you have been under for those neglects, and will appear *for you*, as I have in them appeared *against you*. *I am with you*, to protect you against your enemies that bear ill will to your work, and to prosper you, and to give you success in it; with you, to strengthen your hands, and bless the work of them, without which blessing they labour in vain that build. Note, Those that work for God, have God with them; and if he be for us, who can be against us? If he be with us, what difficulty can stand before us?

C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have three sermons preached by the prophet Haggai, for the encouragement of those that are forward to build the temple. In the first, he assures the builders that the glory of this house they were now building should, in spiritual respects, tho' not in outward, exceed that of Solomon's temple, in which he has an eye to the coming of Christ, ver. 1—9. In the second, he assures them, that tho' their sin in delaying to build the temple had retarded the prosperous progress of all their other affairs, yet now they had set about it in good earnest, he would bless them and give them success, ver. 10—19. In the third, He assures Zerubbabel, that as a reward of his pious zeal and activity herein, he should be a favourite of heaven, and one of the ancestors of Messiah the prince, whose kingdom should be set up on the ruins of all opposing powers, ver. 20—23.

1. **I**N the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying, 2. Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, 3. Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? *is it not in your eyes in comparison of it, as nothing?* 4. Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD, and be strong, O Joshua son of Josedech the high priest, and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts; 5. According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. 6. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: 7. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. 8. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. 9. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

Here is, 1. The date of this message, *ver. 1.* It was sent on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, when the builders had been about a month at work (since the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month) and had got it in some forwardness. Note, Those that are hearty in the service of God, shall receive fresh encouragements from him to proceed in it, as their case calls for them. Set the wheels a going, and God will oil them.

2. The direction of this message, *ver. 2.* The encouragements here are sent to the same persons, to whom the reproofs in the foregoing chapter are directed; for they that are wounded by the convictions of the word, shall be healed and bound up by its consolations. *Speak* to Zerubbabel and Joshua; and the *residue of the people*, the very same that *obeyed the voice of the Lord*, chap. i. 12. and whose spirits God stirred up to do so, chap. i. 14. to them are sent these words of comfort.

3. The message itself. In which observe,

1. The discouragements which they laboured under that were employed in this work, that which was such a damp upon them, and an alloy to their joy when the foundation of the temple was laid, was still a clog upon them, that they could not build such a temple now as *Solomon built*, not so large, so stately, so sumptuous as that was. This fetched tears from the eyes of many, when the dimensions of it were first laid, *Ezra iii. 12.* and still it made the work go on heavily, that the glory of this house *in comparison* with that of the former, was *as nothing*, *ver. 3.* It was now about seventy years since Solomon's temple was destroyed, (for that was in the nineteenth year of the captivity, and this about the nineteenth after the captivity) so that there might be some yet alive that could remember to have seen it, and still they would be upbraiding themselves and their brethren, with the great disparity between this house and that; one could remember the gold with which it was overlaid; another, the precious stones with which it was garnished: one could describe the magnificence of the porch, another of the pillars, and where are these now? This weakened the hands of the builders; for tho'



tho' our gracious God is pleased with us, if we do in sincerity as well as we can in his service, yet our proud heart will scarce let us be pleased with ourselves, unless we do as well as others, whose abilities far exceed ours. And it is sometimes the fault of old people, to discourage the services of the present age, by crying up too much the performances and attainments of the former age; with which others should be provoked to emulation, but not exposed to contempt. *Say not thou that the former days were better than these*, Eccl. vii. 10. but thank God that there is any good in these, as bad as they are.

2. The encouragement that is given them to go on in the work notwithstanding, *ver. 4. Yet now, tho' this house is likely to be much inferior to the former, yet be strong, O Zerubbabel, and be strong, O Josphua*, let not these leading men give way to this suggestion, or be disheartened by it, but do as well as they can, when they cannot do so well as they would; and let *all the people of the land be strong too, and work*; and if the leaders have but a good heart on it, it is hoped the followers will have the better heart. Note, Those that work for God ought to exert themselves with vigour, and then to encourage themselves with hope that it will end well.

3. The grounds of these encouragements; God himself saith to them, *Fear ye not*, *ver. 5.* and gives good reason for it.

1. They have God with them, his Spirit and his special presence. *Be strong, for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts*, *ver. 4.* This he had said before, *chap. i. 13. I am with you*. But we need to have those assurances repeated, that we may have *strong consolation*. The presence of God with us, as the *Lord of hosts*, is enough to silence all our fears, and to help us over all the discouragements we may meet with in the way of our duty. The Jews had *hosts* against them, but they had the Lord of hosts with them to take their part, and plead their cause. He is *with them*, for (1.) He adheres to his promise; his covenant is inviolable; and he will be always theirs, and will appear and act for them, *according to the word that he covenanted with them when they came out of Egypt*. Tho' he *chasten their transgressions with the rod*, yet he will not make his faithfulness to fail. (2.) He dwells among them by his Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy; when he first formed them into a people, *he gave his good Spirit to instruct them*, Neh. ix. 20. and still the spirit, tho' often grieved and provoked to withdraw, *remained among them*. It was the Spirit of God that stirred up their spirits to come out of Babylon, *Ezra i. 5.* and now to build the temple, *Hag. i. 14.* Note, We have reason to be encouraged, as long as we have the Spirit of God remaining among us *to work upon us*, for so long we have God with us *to work for us*.

2. They shall have the *Messiah* among them shortly, he that *should come*. To him bare all the prophets witness, and this prophet particularly here, *ver. 6, 7.* Here is an intimation of the time of his coming, that it would not be long ere he came; *yet once, it is a little while*, and he shall come. The Old Testament church has but one stage more (if we may so say) to travel, five stages were now past, from Adam to Noah, thence to Abraham, thence to Moses, thence to Solomon's temple, thence to the captivity, and now yet one stage more, its sixth day's journey, and then comes the sabbatism of the Messiah's kingdom. Let the Son of man when he comes find faith on the earth, and let the children of promise continue still looking for him, for now it is but *a little while* and he will come; *hold out faith and patience yet a while, for he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry*. And as he then said of his first appearance, so now of his second, *Surely I come quickly*.

Now concerning his coming it is here foretold,

(1.) That it shall be introduced by a *general shaking*, *ver. 6. I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land*. This is applied to the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, to make way for which, he will *judge among the heathen*, Psal. cx. 6. God will once again do for his church, as he did when he brought them out of Egypt, then he shook the heavens and earth at mount Sinai; with the thunder and lightnings, and earthquakes, shook the sea and the dry land, when lanes were made through the sea, and streams fetched out of the rock: this shall be done again, when at the sufferings of Christ the sun shall be darkened, the earth shake, the rocks rend; when at the birth of Christ Herod and all *Jerusalem are troubled*, Mat. ii. 3. and he is set for the fall and rising again of many. When his kingdom was set up, it was with a shock to the nations, the oracles were silenced, idols were destroyed, and the powers of the kingdoms were moved and removed, Heb. xii. 27. It speaks *the removing of the things that are shaken*. Note, The shaking of the nations is often in order to the settling of the church, and the establishing of the things that *cannot be shaken*.

(2.) That it shall issue in a *general satisfaction*. He shall come, as *the desire of all nations*, desirable to all nations, for in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed, with the best of blessings, that had been long expected and desired by the good people in all nations, that had any intelligence from the Old Testament predictions concerning him. Balaam in the land of Moab, had spoken of a star that should arise out of Jacob, and Job in the land of Uz, of his living Redeemer; the concourse of

devout men from all parts at Jerusalem, *Acts ii. 5.* was in expectation of the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom about that time. All the nations that are brought into Christ, and disciplined in his name, have called him, and will call him, *all their salvation and all their desire*. This glorious title of Christ, seems to refer to Jacob's prophecy, *Gen. xlix. 10.* that *to him shall the gathering of the people be*.

3. The house they were now building, shall be filled with glory to that degree, as that its glory shall exceed that of Solomon's temple. The enemies of the Jews followed them with reproach, and cast contempt upon the house they were building; but they might very well endure that, when God undertook to *fill it with glory*. It is God's prerogative to *fill with glory*; the glory that comes from him is satisfying, and not vain glory. Moses's tabernacle and Solomon's temple were filled with glory, when God in a cloud took possession of them; but this house shall be filled with glory of another nature.

1. Let them not be concerned that this house had not so much silver and gold about it, as Solomon's temple had, *ver. 8.* God needs not the *silver and gold* to adorn his temple, for (saith he) *The silver is mine, and the gold mine*; all the silver and gold in the world is his; all that is hid in the bowels of the earth, for *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*. All that is laid up in the exchequers, banks, and treasures of the children of men, and all that circulates for the maintaining of trade and commerce; it is all *the Lord's*. Every penny bears *his image* as well as Cæsar's: and therefore, when *gold and silver* are dedicated to his honour, and employed in his service, no addition is made to him, for it was his before; when David and his princes offered vast sums for the service of the house of God, they acknowledge, *it is all thine own, and of thine own, Lord, have we given thee*, 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 16. Therefore God needs not sacrifice, for *every beast of the forest is his*, Psal. l. 10. Note, If we have *silver and gold*, we must serve and honour God with it, for it is all his own, we have but the use of it, the property remains in him; but if we have not silver and gold to honour God with, we must honour him with such as we have, and he will accept us, for he needs it not; all the *silver and gold* in the world is *his already*. *The earth is full of his riches, so is the great and wide sea also*.

2. Let them be comforted with this, that tho' this temple had *less gold* in it, it should have *more glory* than Solomon's, *ver. 9.* *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former*. This was never true in respect of outward glory, this latter house was indeed in its latter times very much beautified and enriched by Herod, and we find the disciples admiring the stones and buildings of the temple, how fine they were, *Mark xiii. 1.* but it was nothing in comparison with Solomon's temple; and besides, the Jews own, that there were several of the divine glories of the first temple, that were wanting in this, the *Ark*, the *Urim and Thummim*, the *fire from heaven*, and the *Shechinah*, so that we cannot conceive how the glory of this latter house should in any thing exceed that of the former, but in that which would indeed excel all the glories of the first house, the presence of the Messiah in it, the Son of God, his being *presented* there *the glory of his people Israel*, his attending there at twelve years old, and afterwards his preaching and working miracles there, and his driving the buyers and sellers out of it. It was necessary then, that the Messiah should come while that second temple stood, but that being long since destroyed, we must conclude that our Lord Jesus is the Christ, is he that *should come*, and we are to *look for no other*. It was also *the glory of this latter house*, (1.) That before the coming of Christ, it was always kept free from idols and idolatries, and was never polluted with those abominable things, as the first temple often was, (1 Kings xxiii. 11, 12.) and in this its glory excelled all the glory of that. Note, The purity of the church, and the strict adherence to divine institutions, is much more its glory, than external pomp and splendor. (2.) That after Christ, the gospel was preached in it by the apostles, even all the words of this life, *Acts v. 20.* *In the temple Jesus Christ was daily preached*, *Acts v. 42.* Now the ministration of righteousness and life by the gospel, was unspeakably more glorious than the law, which was a *ministration of death and condemnation*, 2 Cor. iii. 4, 10. Note, That is the most valuable glory, which ariseth from our relation to Christ, and our interest in him. As where Christ is, *behold a greater than Solomon is there*, so the heart in which he dwells and makes a *living temple*, behold it is more glorious than Solomon's temple, and will be so to eternity.

3. They should see a comfortable end of their present troubles, and enjoy the pleasure of a happy settlement. *In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts*. Note, God's presence with his people in his ordinances, secures to them all good. If God be with us, peace is with us. But the Jews under the latter temple, had so much trouble, that we must conclude this promise to have its accomplishment in that spiritual peace, which Jesus Christ has by his blood purchased for, and by his last will and testament bequeathed to all believers, *John xiv. 27.* that peace which Christ himself preached as the prophet of peace, and gives as the prince of peace. God will *give peace in this place*, i. e. he will give his Son to be *the peace*, Eph. ii. 14.

10. ¶ In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 11. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, 12. If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oyl, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. 13. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body, touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered, and said, It shall be unclean. 14. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands, and that which they offer there is unclean. 15. And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD. 16. Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the press-fat, for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. 17. ¶ I smote you with blasting, and with mildew, and with hail, in all the labours of your hands, yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD. 18. Consider now from this day, and upward from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider it. 19. Is the feed yet in the barn? yea as yet the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.

This sermon was preached two months after that in the former part of the chapter. The priests and Levites preached constantly, but the prophets preached occasionally; both were good and needful; we have need to be taught our duty in season, and out of season. The people were now going on vigorously with the building of the temple, and in hopes shortly to have it ready for their use, and to be employed in the services of it, and now God sends them a message by his prophet, which would be of use to them.

1. By way of conviction and caution. They were now engaged in a very good work, but they are concerned to see to it, not only that it be good for the matter of it, but that it be done in a right manner, for otherwise it would not be accepted of God. God sees there are many among them that spoil this good work, by going about it with un sanctified hearts and hands, and are likely to gain no advantage to themselves by it, these are here convicted, and all are warned thereby, to purify the hands they employ in this work, for to the pure only all things are pure, and from the pure only that comes which is pure. This matter is here illustrated by the established rules of the ceremonial law, in putting a difference between the clean and the unclean, about which many of the appointments of law were conversant. Hereby it appears that a spiritual use is to be made of the ceremonial law, and that it was intended not only as a divine ritual to the Jews, but for instruction in righteousness to all, even to us upon whom the ends of the world are come, to discover to us both sin and Christ, both our disease and our remedy. Now observe here,

(1.) What the rule of the law was. The prophet is ordered to enquire of the priest concerning it, ver. 11. for their lips should keep this knowledge, and the people should enquire the law at their mouth, Mal. ii. 7. Haggai himself, tho' a prophet, must ask the priest concerning the law. His business as an extraordinary messenger, was to expound the providences of God and to give directions concerning particular duties, as he had done, chap. i. 8, 9. But he would not take the priests work out of their hands, that were the ordinary ministers, and whose business it was to expound the ordinances of God, and to teach the people the meaning of them, and to give the general rules for the observation of them. In a case of that nature, Haggai must himself consult them. Note, God has given to his ministers diversities of gifts, and calls them out to do diversities of services, so that they have need one of another, should make use one of another, and be helpful one to another. The prophet, tho' divinely inspired, cannot say to the priests, I have no need of thee, nor can the priest say so to the prophet. Perhaps Haggai was therefore ordered to consult the priests, that out of their own mouths, he might judge both them and the people committed to their charge, and convict them of worse than a ceremonial pollution. See Lev. x. 10, 11.

Now the rules of the law in the cases propounded, are,

1. That he that has holy flesh in his clothes, cannot by the touch of his clothes communicate holiness, ver. 12. If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, tho' the garment is thereby so far made a devoted thing, as that it is not to be put to common use, till it has first been washed in the holy place, Lev. vi. 27. yet it shall by no means transmit a holiness to either meat and

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drink, so as to make them ever the better to those that use them.

2. That he that is ceremonially unclean by the touch of a dead body, doth by his touch communicate that uncleanness. The law is express, Numb. xix. 22. Whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; yet this Haggai will have from the priest's, own mouth; for concerning those things that we find very plain in our Bibles, yet it is good to have the advice of our ministers. The sum of these two rules is, that pollution is easier communicated than sanctification; that is (saith Grotius) there are many ways of vice, but only one of virtue, and that a difficult one. Bonum oritur ex integris, malum ex quolibet defectu. Let not men think that living among good people, will recommend them to God, if they be not good themselves, but let them fear that touching the unclean thing will defile them, and therefore let them keep at a distance from it.

(2.) How it is here applied, ver. 14. So is this people, and so is this nation before me, he doth not call them his people, and his nation, they are unworthy to be owned by him, but this people and this nation; they have been thus before God; they thought their offering sacrifices on the altar would sanctify them, and excuse their neglect to build the temple, and remove the curse which by that neglect they had brought upon their common enjoyments; no, saith God, your holy flesh and your altar, will be so far from sanctifying your meat and drink, your wine and oil to you, that your contempt of God's temple will bring a pollution not only on your common enjoyments, but even on your sacrifices too; so that while you continued in that neglect all was unclean to you, nay, and so is this people still; and so they will be; on these terms they will still stand with me, and on no other: that if they be profane and sensual, and morally impure, if they have wicked hearts and live wicked lives, tho' they work never so hard at the temple while it is building, and tho' they offer never so many and costly sacrifices there when it is built, yet that shall not serve to sanctify their meat and drink to them, and to give them a comfortable use of it: nay, the impurity of their hearts and lives, shall make even that work of their hands, and all their offerings unclean, and an abomination to God. And the case is the same with us. They whose devotions are plausible, but their conversations wicked, will find their devotions unable to sanctify their enjoyments, but their wickedness prevailing to pollute them. Note, When we are employed in any good work, we should be jealous over ourselves, lest we render it unclean by our corruptions and mismanagements.

2. By way of comfort and encouragement. If their hearts be right with God, and their eye single in his service, they shall have the benefit of it; God will take away the judgment of famine wherewith they have been corrected for their remissness, and will restore them great plenty. This they are called to consider, and to observe, whether God would not be to the utmost as good as his word, and by his providence remarkably countenance and recompense their reformation in this matter. To make this the more signal, let them set down the day when they began to work at the building of the temple, to raise the structure upon the foundations that had been laid some time before. On the twenty fourth day of the sixth month, they began to prepare materials, chap. i. 5. and now on the twenty fourth day of the ninth month, they began to lay a stone upon a stone in the temple of the Lord; let them take notice of this day, and observe,

1. How they were gone behind hand in their estates before this day. Let them remember the time when there was a sensible waste and decay in all they had, ver. 16. A man came to his garner expecting to find a heap of twenty measures of corn, so much he used to have from such a piece of ground, or so much used to be left at that time of the year, or so much he took it for granted there was, when he fetched the last from it, but he found it unaccountably diminished, and when he came to measure it, there were but ten measures; it was run in, and dried away in the keeping; or vermin had eaten it, or it was stolen. In like manner he went to the wine press, expecting to draw fifty vessels of wine, for so much he used to have from such a quantity of grapes, but they did not yield as usual, for he could get but twenty. This agrees with what we had, chap. i. 9. Ye looked for much, and it came to little. Note, It is our folly that we are apt to raise our expectation from the creature, and to think to-morrow must needs be as this day, and much more abundant, but we are commonly disappointed, and the more we expect, the more grievous the disappointment is. In the stores and treasures of the new covenant we need not fear being disappointed, when we come by faith to draw from them.

But this was not all, God did visibly contend with them in the weather, ver. 17. I smote you with blastings, winds and frosts, which made every green thing to wither, and with mildew, which choked the corn when it was knitting, and with hail, which battered it down and broke it, when it was grown to some maturity; thus they were balked in all the labour of their hands, while they neglect to lay their hand to the work of God, and to labour in that. Note, While we take no care of God's interest, we cannot expect he should take care of ours. And when he thus walks contrary to us, he expects that we should return to

him, and to our duty. But this people either saw not the hand of God in it, imputing it to chance, or saw not their own sin the provoking cause of it, and therefore *turned not to him*. They were a long time incorrigible and unhumbled under these rebukes, so that God's hand was *stretched out still*, for the people *turned not to him that smote them*, Isa. ix. 12, 13. They might easily observe, that as long as they continued in neglect of the temple work, all their affairs went backward. But,

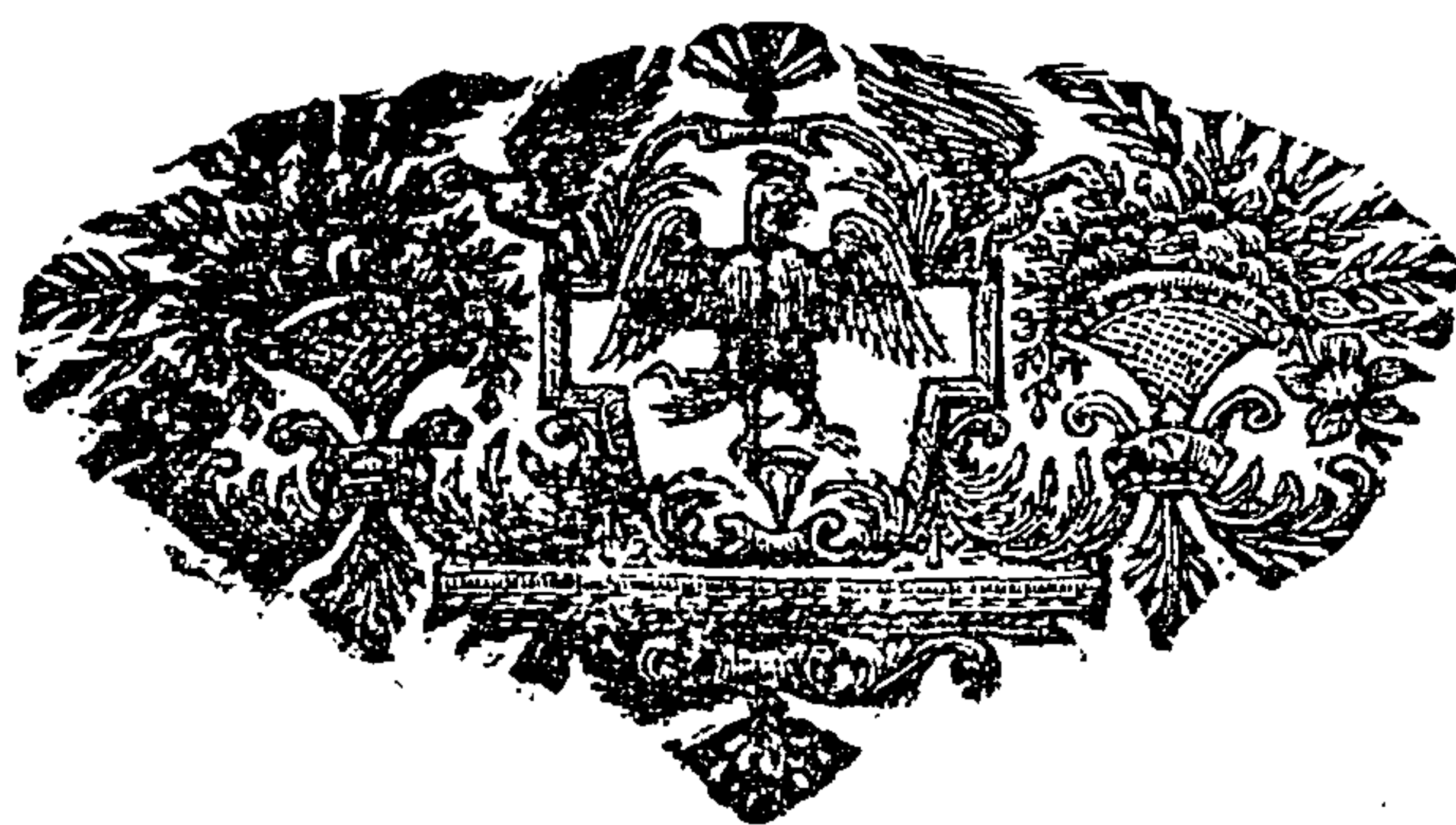
2. Let them now observe, that they should find that from this day forward God would bless them, ver. 18, 19. *Consider now*, whether when you begin to change your way towards God, you do not find God changing his way towards you; from *this day* when you fall to work about the temple, *consider it*, I say, and you shall find a remarkable turn given for the better to all your affairs. *Is the seed yet in the barn?* Yes it is, and not yet thrown into the ground; the fruit trees do not as yet bud, the *wine* and the *fig-tree*, and the *olive-tree*, have not as yet *brought forth*, so that nothing appears to promise a good harvest and vintage next year; nature doth not promise it, but now you begin to apply yourselves in good earnest to your duty, the God of nature promiseth it; he has said, *from this day I will bless you*. It is the best day's work you ever did in your lives, for from hence you may date the return of your prosperity. He doth not say what they shall be, but in general, *I will bless you*, and those that know what are the fruits flowing from God's blessing, know they can desire no more to make them happy. *I will bless you*, and then you shall soon recover all your losses, shall thrive as fast as before you went backward, for *the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich*, and those *whom he blesteth are blessed indeed*. Note, When we begin to make conscience of our duty to God we may expect his blessing: and this tree of life is so known by its fruits, that one may discern almost to a day, a remarkable turn of providence, in favour of those that return in a way of duty; so that they and others may say, *from this day they are blessed*. See Mal. iii. 10. And *who is wise will observe these things, and understand by them the loving kindness of the Lord*.

20. ¶ And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, 21. Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth, 22. And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen, and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them, and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. 23. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.

After Haggai's sermon *ad populum*, here follows one the same day *ad magistratum*; a word directed particularly to Zerubbabel the governor of Judah, who was a leading active man in this good work the people now set about, and therefore he shall have some particular marks put upon him, ver. 21. *Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah*, speak to him by himself, he hath thoughts in his head far above those of the common people, as wise princes use to have, that move in a higher and larger sphere than others. The people of the land are in care about their corn fields and vineyards, God has assured them that they shall prosper, and we hope that will make them easy, but Zerubbabel is concerned about the community, and the interests of that about the neighbour nations, and the revolutions of their governments, and what will become of the few and feeble Jews in those changes and convulsions, and how such a poor prince as he is, should be able to keep his ground, and serve his country. Go to him, saith God, and tell him it shall be well with him and his remnant, and let that make him easy.

1. Let him expect to hear of great commotions, in the nations of the earth, and let them not be a surprize to him; behold he is told of them before, ver. 21, 22. *I will shake the heavens and the earth*. This he had said before, ver. 6, 7. and now saith it again to Zerubbabel; let him expect shaking times, universal convulsions; the world is like the sea, like the wheel, always in motion, but sometimes in a special manner turbulent. But blessed be God if the earth be shaken, it is to *shake the wicked out of it*, Job xxxviii. 13. In the apocalyptick visions earthquakes bode no ill to the church. Here the heavens and the earth are shaken, that proud oppressors may be broken and brought down, *I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms*. The Chaldean monarchy that had been the throne of kingdoms a great while, was already overthrown, and the powers that are, and are yet to come, shall in like manner be overthrown; their day will come to fall. (1.) Tho' they be never so powerful, the *strength of their kingdoms* shall be destroyed; they *trust in chariots and horses*, Psal. xx. 7. but their *chariots* shall be *overthrown*, and *those that ride them*, so that they shall not be able to attack the people of God whom they persecute, or to escape the judgments of God which persecute them. (2.) Tho' there appear none likely to be the instruments of their destruction, yet God will bring it about, for they shall be brought down, *every one by the sword of his brother*. This reads the doom of all the enemies of God's church, that will not repent to give him glory; it seems likewise designed as a promise of Christ's victory over the power of darkness: his overthrow of Satan's throne, that *throne of kingdoms*, the throne of the God of this world; the taking from him all the armour wherein he trusted, and *dividing the spoil*. And all opposing *rule, principality and power*, shall be put down, that the *kingdom* may be *delivered up to God, even the Father*.

2. Let him depend upon it, that he shall be safe under the divine protection, in the midst of all these commotions, ver. 23. Zerubbabel was active to build God a house, and therefore God makes the same promise to him as he did to David on the like occasion, that he would *build him a house*; and establish it, even *in that day* when heaven and earth are shaken; this promise refers to this good man himself, and to his family; he honoured God, and God would honour him; his successors likewise in the government of Judah, might take encouragement from it; tho' their authority was very precarious as to men, yet God would confirm it, and this would contribute to the stability of the people over whom God had set them. But this promise hath special reference to Christ, who lineally descended from Zerubbabel, and is the sole builder of the gospel temple. (1.) Zerubbabel is here owned as *God's servant*, and it is an honourable mention that is hereby made of him, as Moses and David *my servant*. When God destroys his enemies, he will prefer his servants. Our Lord Jesus is his Father's servant in the work of redemption, but faithful as a son, Isa. xlii. 1. (2.) He is owned as God's *elect*, *I have chosen thee* into this office, and whom God makes choice of, he will make use of. Our Lord Jesus is chosen of God, 1 Pet. ii. 4. And he is the head of the chosen remnant, in him they are chosen. (3.) It is promised that being chosen, God will make him as a signet. Jeconiah had been as the *signet on God's right hand*, but was *plucked thence*, Jer. xxii. 24. and now Zerubbabel is substituted in the room of him. He shall be near and dear to God, precious in his sight and honourable, and his family shall continue till the Messiah spring out of it, who is *the signet on God's right hand*; this speaks (1.) The *delight* the Father has in him; *in him* he once and again declared himself to be *well pleased*. He is set as a *seal upon his heart*, a *seal upon his arm*, is brought near unto him, Dan. vii. 13. is *hid in the shadow of his hand*, Isa. xlix. 2. (2.) The *dominion* the Father has entrusted him with. Princes sign their edicts, grants and commissions with their signet rings, Esth. iii. 10. Our Lord Jesus is the signet on God's right hand, for all power is given to him; and derived from him. By him the great charter of the gospel is signed and ratified, and it is in him that all the promises of God are yea, and amen.



A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

O F T H E

Prophecy of ZECHARIAH.

This prophet was colleague with the prophet Haggai, and a worker together with him in forwarding the building of the second temple, Ezra v. 1. for two are better than one : Christ sent forth his disciples two and two. Zechariah began to prophesy some time after Haggai. But he continued longer, soared higher in visions and revelations. Wrote more, and prophesied more particularly concerning Christ than Haggai had done ; so the last shall be first : the last in time sometimes proves first in dignity. He begins with a plain practical sermon, expressive of that which was the scope of his prophesying, in the five first verses, but afterwards to the end of chap. vi. he relates the visions he saw, and the instructions he received immediately from heaven by them. At chap. vii. from an enquiry made by the Jews concerning fasting he takes occasion to shew them the duty of their present day, and to encourage them to hope for God's favour, to the end of chap. viii. After which there are two sermons, which are both called burthens of the word of the Lord, one begins with chap. ix. the other with chap. xii. which probably were preached some time after ; the scope of which is to reprove for sin, and threatens God's judgments against the impenitent, and to encourage those that feared God with assurances of mercy God had in store for his church, and especially of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter after the introduction, ver. 1. we have, (1.) An awakening call to a sinful people to repent of their sins, and return to God, ver. 2—6. (2.) Great encouragement given to hope for mercy. (1.) By the vision of the horses, ver. 7—11. (2.) By the prayer of the angel for Jerusalem, and the answer to that prayer, ver. 12—17. (3.) By the vision of the four carpenters that were employed to cut off the four horns, with which Judah and Jerusalem were scattered, ver. 18—21.

1. **I**N the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, 2. The LORD hath been sore dis-

pleased with your fathers. 3. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. 4. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus, saith the LORD of hosts, Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings : but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD. 5. Your fathers, where are they ? and the prophets, do they live for ever ? 6. But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers ? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

Here

Here is, 1. The foundation of Zechariah's ministry; it is laid in a divine authority. *The word of the Lord came to him.* He received a divine commission to be God's mouth to the people, and with it instructions what to say. He received of the Lord that which also he delivered unto them. The word of the Lord *was to him*, it came in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, as a real thing, and not a fancy. For the ascertaining of this we have here,

1. The time when the word of the Lord came first to him, or, when the word that next follows came to him: It was in the *second year of Darius*. Before the captivity of the prophets dated their writings by the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel: but now by the reigns of the kings of Persia, to whom they were subjects. Such a melancholy change had sin made of their circumstances. Zerubbabel took not so much upon him as to have publick acts dated by the years of his government: And in things of this nature the prophets, as is fit, complied with the usage of the time, and scrupled not to reckon by the years of the heathen kings, as *Dan. vii. 1—viii.* 2. Zechariah preached his first sermon in the *eighth month* of this *second year* of Darius; Haggai preached his in the *sixth month* of the same year, *Hag. i. 1.* The people being readily obedient to the word of the Lord in the mouth of Haggai, God blessed them with another prophet; for to him that hath, and useth well what he has, more shall be given.

2. The name and family of the prophet to whom the word of the Lord came. He was *Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo*, and he was *the prophet*; as Haggai is called the prophet, *Hag. i. 1.* For though in former ages there was one Iddo a prophet, *2 Chron. xii. 12.* yet we have no reason to think that Zechariah was of his progeny, or should be denominated from him. The learned Mr Pemble is clear of opinion, that this Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, is the same that our Saviour saith *was slain between the temple and the altar*, perhaps many years after the rebuilding of the temple, *Matth. xxiii. 35.* and that our Saviour doth not mean (as is commonly thought) Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, for why should Jehoiada be called Barachiah? And he thinks the manner of Christ's accounts persuades us to think so; for reckoning up the innocent blood shed by the Jews, he begins at Abel, and ends even in the last of the holy prophets. Whereas after Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, many prophets and righteous men were put to death by them. It is true there is no mention made in any history of their slaying this Zechariah, but Josephus might industriously conceal that shame of his nation. Perhaps what Zechariah spoke in his prophesying concerning Christ, of his being sold, his being wounded in the house of his friends, and the shepherd being smitten, was verified in the prophet himself, and so he became a type of Christ. Probably, being assaulted by his persecutors, he took sanctuary in the court of the priests (and some think he was himself a priest) and so was slain between the porch and the altar.

2. The first-fruits of Zechariah's ministry. Before he came to visions and revelations, and delivered his prophetic discourses, he preached that which was plain and practical; for it is best to begin with that: Before he published the promises of mercy, he published calls to repentance, for thus the *way of the Lord* must be prepared. Law must be first preached, and then gospel.

Now, 1. The prophet here puts them in mind of the controversy God had had with their fathers, *ver. 2.* *The Lord has been sore displeased with your fathers*, and has laid them under the tokens of his displeasure. You have heard with your ears, and your fathers have told you of it; you have seen with your eyes the woful remains of it. God's quarrel with you has been of long standing, and therefore it is time for you to think of taking it up. Note, The judgments of God which those that went before us were under should be taken as warnings to us not to tread in their steps, and calls to repentance, that we may cut off the entail of the curse, and get it turned into a blessing.

2. He calls them in God's name to return to him, and make their peace with him, *ver. 3.* God by him saith, That to this backsliding people which he had often said by his servants the prophets, *turn ye to me* in a way of faith and repentance, duty and obedience, and *I will turn to you* in a way of favour and mercy, peace and reconciliation. Let the rebels return to their allegiance, and they shall be taken under the protection of the government, and enjoy all the privileges of good subjects. Let them change their way, and God will change his. See *Mal. iii. 7.* But that which is most observable here is, that God is called here the *Lord of hosts* three times; *Thus saith the Lord of hosts.* It is he that speaks, and therefore you are bound to regard what he saith. *Turn ye to me, saith the Lord of hosts,* That speaks the authority and obligation of the command, and *I will turn to you, saith the Lord of hosts,* That speaks the validity and value of the promise; so that it is no vain repetition. Note, The Consideration of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion should both engage and encourage sinners to repent, and turn to him. It is very desirable having the Lord of hosts our friend, and very dreadful having him our enemy.

3. He warns them not to persist in their impenitence as *their fathers* had done, *ver. 4.* *Be ye not as your fathers.* Instead of being hardened in their evil courses by the example of their fathers sin, let them rather be deterred from them by the exam-

ple of their fathers punishment. We are apt to be governed very much by precedent, and we are well or ill governed according to the use we make of the precedents before us. The same examples to some are a favour of life unto life, to others a favour of death unto death. Some argued, shall we be wiser than our fathers? They never minded the prophets, and why then shall we mind them? They made laws against them, and why should we tolerate them? But they are here taught how they should argue; Our fathers slighted the prophets, and God was *sore displeased* with them for it, therefore let us the more carefully regard what God saith to us by his prophets. Review what is past and observe,

1. What was the message that God sent by his servants the prophets to your fathers. *The former prophets cried to your fathers*, cried aloud, and did not spare, not spare themselves, not spare your fathers, they cried as men in earnest, as men that would be heard, they spoke not as from themselves, but in the name of the *Lord of hosts*, and this was the substance of what they said, the burthen of every song, the application of every sermon, *Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doing*; the very same that we now preach to you. Be persuaded to leave your sins, resolve to have no more to do with them. A speedy reformation is the only way to prevent an approaching ruin. *Turn ye now* from sin to God without delay.

2. How little this message was regarded by your fathers, *but they did not hear, they did not heed.* They turned a deaf ear to these calls; *they would not hearken unto me, saith the Lord.* They would not be reclaimed, would not be ruled by the word I sent them; say not then you will do as your fathers did, for they did amiss, see *Jer. xlv. 17.* Note, We must not follow the examples of our dear fathers, unless they were God's dear children, nor any further than they were dutiful and obedient to him.

3. What is become both of your fathers and of the prophets that preached to them. They are all dead and gone; *ver. 5.* (1.) *Your fathers, where are they?* The whole generation of them is swept away, and their place knows them no more. Note, When we think of our ancestors, that are gone thro' the world, and gone out of it before us, we should think *where they are.* Here they were in the towns and countries where we live, passing and repassing in the same streets, dwelling in the same houses, trading in the same shops and exchanges, worshipping God in the same churches. But *where are they?* They are somewhere still, when they died there was not any end of them; they are in eternity, in the world of spirits, the unchangeable world, to which we are hastening apace; *Where are they?* Those of them that lived and died in sin are in torment, and we are warned by Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, to look to it that we *come not to that place of torment*, Luke xvi. 28, 29. Those of them that lived and died in Christ are in *paradise*, and if we live and die as they did, we shall be with them shortly, with them eternally. (2.) *The prophets also, did they live for ever?* No, they are gone too. The treasure is put into earthen vessels, the water of life into earthen pitchers, often cracked, and brought home broken at last. Christ is a prophet that *lives for ever*, but all other prophets have a period put to their office. Note, Ministers are dying men, and live not for ever in this world. They are to look upon themselves as such, and to preach accordingly, as those that must be silenced shortly, and know not which sermon may be the last; people are to look upon them as such, and to hear accordingly, as those that yet a little while have the *light with them*, that they may walk and work *while they have the light*. O that this weighty consideration had its due weight given it, that we are dying ministers dealing with dying people about the concerns of immortal souls, and an awful eternity, which both they and we are standing upon the brink of! It concerns us to think of the prophets that are gone, that were *before us of old*, Jer. xxviii. 8. They that were the glory of men withered and fell, but the *word of the Lord endures for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 24, 25. The prophets that are now, do *we live for ever?* so some read it, no, Haggai and Zechariah will not be long with you; and prophecy itself shall shortly cease. In another world, both we and our prophets shall *live for ever*, and to prepare for that world, ought to be our great care and business in this.

4. What the effects of the word were which God spoke to them by his prophets, *ver. 6.* The preachers died, and the hearers died, but the word of God died not; that took effect, and not one iota or tittle of it fell to the ground: As the rain and snow, from heaven it *shall not return void*, Isa. lv. 11. He appeals to themselves; they knew very well, (1.) That the judgments God had threatened, were executed upon their fathers, and they were made to feel what they would not believe and fear. *My statutes which I commanded my servants the prophets*, the precepts, with the penalties annexed, which I charged them with the delivery of, *did they not take hold of your fathers?* Though God's prophets could not fasten convictions upon them; the calamities threatened overtook them, and they could not escape them, or get out of the reach of them. God's words *took hold* of them as the bailiff arrests the debtor, and takes him in execution, for contempt. Note, The unbelief of man cannot make the threatenings of God's word of none effect, but sooner or later they will take place,

place, if the prescribed course be not taken to prevent the execution of them. God's anger will certainly *take hold* of those that will not be taken hold of by his authority; for when he judgeth, he will overcome. (2.) That they themselves could not but own the accomplishment of the word of God in the judgments of God that were upon them, and that therein he was righteous, and had done them no wrong: *They returned and said* (they changed their mind, and when it was too late to prevent the ruin of their nation, they acknowledged) *like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways and doings*, to reckon with us for them, *so hath he dealt with us*, and we must acknowledge both his truth and his justice; must blame ourselves only, and have no blame to lay to him. *Sero sapiunt Phryges*. This *after-wit*, as it is a proof of the truth of God, so it is a proof of the folly of men, that will look no further than they can see: They would never be persuaded to say in time, God *will be* as good as his word, for he is *faithful*, he *will deal* with us according to our deserts, for he is *righteous*. But now they see both plain enough, when the sentence is executed; now he that runs, may read and publish the exact agreement that appears between the present providences and the former predictions which then were slighted, between the present punishments and the former sins which then were persisted in. Now they cannot but say, *The Lord is righteous*, Dan. ix. 11, 12, 13.

7. ¶ Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, 8. I saw by night, and behold, a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom, and behind him were there red horses speckled and white. 9. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me, said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. 10. And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. 11. And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle-trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. 12. ¶ Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? 13. And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me, *with good words, and comfortable words*. 14. So the angel that communed with me, said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I am jealous for Jerusalem, and for Zion with a great jealousy. 15. And I am very fore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. 16. Therefore thus saith the LORD, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. 17. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, my cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad, and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

We now come to visions and revelations of the Lord; for in that way God chose to speak by Zechariah, to awaken the peoples attention, and to engage their humble reverence of the word, and their humble enquiries into it, and to fix it the more in their minds and memories. Most of the following visions seem designed for the comfort of the Jews, now newly returned out of captivity, and their encouragement to go on with the building of the temple.

The scope of this vision (which is as an introduction to the rest) is to assure the Jews of the care God took of them, and the eye of his providence that was upon them for good, now in their present state, when they seemed to be deserted, and their case deplorable. The vision is dated, *ver. 7.* the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, three months after he preached that sermon, *ver. 1.* in which he called them to repentance from the consideration of God's judgments. Finding that that sermon had a good effect, and they returned to God in a way of duty, the assurances he had given them are confirmed, that God would return to them in a way of mercy. Now observe here,

1. *What the prophet saw*, and the explication of that.

No. lxxvii.

1. He saw a grove of *myrtle-trees*; a dark shady grove, down in a bottom, hid by the adjacent hills, so that you were not aware of it, till you were just upon it. This represented the low, dark, solitary, melancholy condition of the Jewish church at this time. They were over-topped by all their neighbours, buried in obscurity; what friends they had were hidden, and there appeared no way of relief and succour for them. Note, The church has not been always *visible*, but sometimes hid, as the *woman in the wilderness*, Rev. xii. 6.

2. He saw a man mounted upon a *red horse*, standing in the midst of this shady myrtle grove. This man is no other than the man Christ Jesus; the same that appeared to Joshua with his sword drawn in his hand as captain of the host of the Lord, Josh. v. 13, 14. and to St John, with his bow, and his crown, Rev. vi. 2. Tho' the church was in a low condition, yet Christ was present in the midst of it: was it hid by the hills? he was *much more hid* in the myrtle grove, yet, hid as in an ambush, ready to appear for the seasonable relief of his people, to their happy surprize. Compare Isa. xlv. 15. *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself*, and yet Israel's God and Saviour at the same time, their *holy One in the midst of them*. He was *riding*, as a man of war; as a man in haste; *riding on the heavens for the help* of his people, Deut. xxxiii. 26. He rode on a *red horse*; either naturally so, or died red with the blood of war, as this same victorious prince appeared *red in his apparel*, Isa. lxiii. 1, 2. Red is a *fiery* colour, noting that he is *jealous for Jerusalem*, ver. 14. and very angry at her enemies. Christ under the law appeared on a *red horse*, noting the terror of that dispensation, and that he had yet his conflict before him, when he was to *resist unto blood*. But under the gospel he appears on a *white horse*, Rev. vi. 2. and again, chap. xix. 11. noting that he has now gained the victory, and rides in triumph; and hangs out the *white*, not the *bloody* flag.

3. He saw a troop of horse attending him, ready to receive and obey his orders: *Behind him there were some red horses*, and some *speckled*, and some *white*; angels attending the Lord Jesus, ready to be employed by him for the service of his church, some in acts of judgment, others of mercy, others in mixed events. Note, The King of the church has angels at command, not only to do him honour, but to minister for the good of those that are his.

4. He enquired into the signification of this vision. He had an angel talking with him as his instructor, besides those he saw in the vision, so had Ezekiel, chap. xl. 3. and Daniel, chap. viii. 16. Zechariah asked him, *ver. 9.* O my Lord, what are these? And it should seem, this angel that talked with him was Christ himself: the man on the red horse, whom the rest were attendants on; to him immediately Zechariah addresseth himself; would we be acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, we must make our application not to angels, they are themselves learners, but to Christ himself, who is alone able to take the book, and open the seals, Rev. v. 7. The prophet's question implies a humble acknowledgment of his own ignorance, and an earnest desire to be informed; O let me know what these are: this he desired, not for the satisfying of his curiosity, but that he might be furnished with something proper for the comfort and encouragement of the people of God, in their present distresses.

5. He received from the angel that talked with him, *ver. 9.* and from the man that stood among the myrtle-trees, *ver. 10.* the interpretation of this vision. Note, Jesus Christ is ready to instruct those that are humbly desirous to be taught the things of God. He presently said, *I will shew thee what these be*. What knowledge we have, or may have, concerning the world of spirits, we are indebted to Christ for. The account given him was, *These are they whom the Lord hath sent*, they are his messengers, his envoys, appointed (as his eyes are said to do, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.) to walk, to run, to fly swiftly through the earth, to observe what is done in it, and to execute the divine commands. God needs them not, but he is pleased to employ them, and we need the comfort arising from the doctrine of their administration.

2. *What the prophet heard*, and what instructions were thereby given him. Faith comes by hearing, and generally in visions there was something said.

1. He heard the report or representation which the angels made to Christ of the present state of the world, *ver. 11.* They had been out abroad as flying posts, (*being hastened by the King of kings commandment*, Esth. iii. 15.) and being returned, they give this account to the angel that stood among the myrtle-trees, (for to the Lord Jesus angels themselves are accountable) *we have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest*. We are taught to pray that the will of God may be done by men on earth as it is done by the angels in heaven; and here we see what need we have to pray so, for it is far from being so. For, (1.) We find the world of angels here *very busy*. Those that are employed in the court above, rest not day nor night from praising God, which is their business there; and those that are employed in the camp below, are never idle, nor lose time, they are still *ascending and descending upon the Son of man*, John i. 51. as on Jacob's ladder, Gen. xxviii. 12. they are still

still walking to and fro through the earth. Thus active, thus industrious Satan owns himself to be to do mischief, Job i. 7. It is well for us that good angels bestir themselves as much to do good, and that here in this earth we have guardians going about continually seeking to do us a kindness, as we have adversaries that as roaring lions go about continually seeking to devour us. Tho' holy angels in this earth meet with a great deal that is disagreeable, yet while they are going on God's errands, they stick not to walk to and fro through it: Their own habitation, which those that fell liked not, they will like the better when they return. (2.) We find the world of mankind here very careless; all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest; while all the church is made uneasy, tossed with tempests, and not comforted. Those that are strangers to the church are secure, those that are enemies to it are successful. The Chaldeans and Persians dwell at ease, while the poor Jews are continually alarmed; as when the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed. The children of men are merry and jovial, but none grieved for the affliction of God's children. Note, It is sad to think what a deep sleep the world is cast into! What a spirit of slumber hath seized the generality of mankind, that are under God's wrath and Satan's power, and yet secure and unconcerned, they sit still, and are at rest! Luke xvii. 26, &c.

2. He heard Christ's intercession with the Father for his afflicted church, ver. 12. The angels related the posture of affairs in this lower world, but we read not of any prayers they made for the redress of the grievances they had made a remonstrance of; no, it is the angel among the myrtle-trees that is the great intercessor: upon the report of the angels, he immediately turned heavenward, and said, Lord, wilt thou not have mercy on thy church? (1.) The thing he intercedes for is mercy, as Psal. lxxxv. 7. Shew us thy mercy, O Lord. Note, God's mercy is all in all to the church's comfort; and all his mercy must be hoped for through Christ's mediation. (2.) The thing he complains of is the delay of this mercy; how long wilt thou not have mercy! He knows that mercies through him shall be built up for ever, Psal. lxxxix. 2. but thinks it long that the building is deferred. (3.) The objects of compassion recommended to the divine mercies are Jerusalem, the holy city, and other, the cities of Judah, that were now in ruins, for God had had indignation against them, now threescore and ten years. He mentions seventy years, because that was the time fixed in the divine counsels for the continuance of the captivity; so long the indignation lasted, and tho' now for a little space grace had been shewed them from the Lord their God to give them some reviving, Ezra ix. 8. yet the scars of those seventy years captivity still remained so deep, so painful, that that is the melancholy string they still harp upon, the divine indignation during those seventy years. Dr Lightfoot thinks that whereas the seventy years of the captivity were reckoned from Jehoiakim's fourth year, and ended in the first of Cyrus; these seventy years are to be computed from the eleventh of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem and the temple were burnt, about nineteen years after the first captivity, and which ended in this second year of Darius Hystaspes, about seventeen years after Cyrus's proclamation; as that seventy years mentioned, chap. vii. 5. was about nineteen years after; the captivity went off as it came on gradually: Lord, we are still under the burden of the seventy years wrath, and wilt thou be angry with us for ever!

3. He heard a gracious reply given to this intercession of Christ's for his church; for it is a prevailing intercession, always acceptable, and him the Father heareth always. Ver. 13. The Lord answered the angel, this angel of the covenant, with good words, and comfortable words, with promises of mercy and deliverance, and the perfecting of what he had begun in favour to them. These were comfortable words to Christ, who is grieved in the grievances of his church, and comfortable to all that mourn with Zion. God often answers prayer with good words, when he doth not presently appear in great works, and those good words are real answers to prayer; mens good words will not feed the body, Jam. ii. 16. but God's good words will feed the faith, for saying and doing with him are not two things, tho' they are with us.

4. He heard that reply which was given to the angel repeated to himself, with a commission to publish it to the children of his people, for their comfort. The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him he signified to his servant John, and by him to the churches, Rev. i. 1, 4. Thus all the good words, and comfortable words of the gospel we receive from Jesus Christ, as he received them from the Father, in answer to the prayer of his blood, and his ministers are appointed to preach them to all the world. Now God would speak comfortably to Jerusalem: Zechariah is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. The voice said, Cry. Cry then; the prophets must now cry as loud, to shew God's people their comforts, as ever they did formerly to shew them their transgressions, Isa. xl. 2, 3, 6. And if he ask what he shall cry? He is here instructed.

1. He must proclaim the wrath God has in store for the enemies of Jerusalem. He is jealous for Zion with great jealousy, ver. 14. i. e. He takes himself to be highly affronted by the injuries, and indignities that are done to his church, as he had been

formerly by the iniquities found in his church. The earth sat still, and was at rest, ver. 11. not relenting at all, or shewing the least remorse for all the mischief they had done to Jerusalem; as Joseph's brethren, who when they had sold him, sat down to eat bread, and this God took very ill, ver. 15. I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease, and have no concern for the afflicted church. Much more will he be displeased with those that are at ease in Zion, Amos vi. 1. with Zion's own sons that sympathize not with her in her sorrows. But this was not all; they were not only not concerned for her, but they were concerned against her. I was but a little displeased with my people, and designed to correct them moderately; but those that were employed as instruments of the correction, cast off all pity; and with the greatest rage and malice helped forward the affliction, and added to it, persecuting those whom God had smitten, Psal. lxxix. 26. and insulting over those whom he had troubled. See Isa. xlvii. 6.—x. 5. Ezek. xxv. 12, 15. Note, God is displeased with those that help forward the affliction even of such as suffer justly; for true humanity in such a case is good divinity.

2. He must proclaim the mercy God has in store for Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, ver. 16. He must cry, Thus saith the Lord, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; I was going away in wrath, but I am now returning in love. Cry yet to the same purpose, ver. 17. There must now be line upon line for consolation, as formerly there had been for conviction. The Lord, even the Lord of hosts, assures them, (1.) That the temple shall be built, that is now but in the building: this good work they are now about, tho' it meet with much discouragement, shall be perfected, and they shall have the tokens of God's presence, and opportunities of conversing with him, and worshipping him as formerly. Note, It is good news indeed to any place, to hear that God will build his house in it. (2.) That Jerusalem shall again be builded as a city compact together, which had formerly been its glory, Psal. cxxii. 3. A line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem, in order to the rebuilding of it with great exactness and uniformity. (3.) That the nation shall again become populous and rich, tho' now diminished and impoverished; not only Jerusalem, but other cities that are reduced and lie in a little compass shall yet spread abroad, or be diffused; their suburbs shall extend far, and colonies shall be transplanted from them; and this thro' prosperity: they shall be so numerous, and so wealthy, that there shall not be room for them: they shall complain the place is too strait, Isa. xlix. 20. As they had been scattered and spread abroad through their calamities, so they should now be thro' their prosperity, Let thy fountains be dispersed, Prov. v. 16. The cities that should thus increase God calls his cities; they are blessed by him, and they are fruitful and multiply, and replenish the land. (4.) That all their present sorrows should not only be balanced, but for ever silenced by divine consolations; the Lord shall yet comfort Zion. Yet at length, tho' her griefs and grievances may continue long, God has comforts in reserve for Zion, and all her mourners. (5.) That all this will be the fruit of God's preventing distinguishing favour; he shall yet choose Jerusalem, shall renew his choice, renew his covenant, shall make it appear he has chosen Jerusalem. As he first built them up into a people, when he brought them out of Egypt, so he will now rebuild them when he brings them out of Babylon, not for any worthiness of theirs, but in pursuance of his own choice, Deut. vii. 7, 8. Jerusalem is the city he has chosen, and he will not cast it off.

18. ¶ Then lift I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, four horns. 19. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. 20. And the LORD shewed me four carpenters. 21. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lift up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

It is the comfort and triumph of the church, Isa. lix. 19. that when the enemy shall come in like a flood, with mighty force and fury, then the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him: Now in this vision, (the second that this prophet had) we have an illustration of that; God's Spirit making a stand and making head against the formidable power of the church's adversaries.

1. We have here the enemies of the church bold and daring, and threatening to be its death, to cut off the name of Israel; such the people of God had lately been insulted by. I looked, and behold, four horns, ver. 18. which are explained, ver. 19. They are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem; i. e. the Jews both in the country and in the city, because they were

were the Israel of God. They have *tossed them*, so some read it; as furious bulls with their horns toss that which they are enraged at. They have scattered them, *so that no man did lift up his head*, ver. 21. No man durst shew his face, for fear of them, much less give them any opposition, or make head against them. They are *horns* noting their dignity and dominion, *horns exalted*; and their strength and power and violence. They are *four horns*, for the Jews are surrounded with them on every side; when they avoid one horn that pulseth at them, they run upon another. The men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many of Israel that joined themselves to them, set about the building of the temple, but the enemies of that work from all sides pushed at them, and drove them from it. Rehun and Shimshai, and other the Samaritans that opposed the building of the temple, were these horns, *Ezra* iv. 7. So were Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Ammonites and Arabians that opposed the building of the wall, *Neh.* iv. 7. Note, The church's enemies have horns, and use them to the hindrance of every good work. The great enemy of the New Testament church hath *seven heads* and *ten horns*, *Rev.* xvii. 3. So that they who endeavour to do the church any service must expect to be pushed at.

2. We have here the friends of the church *active*, and prevailing. The prophet did himself *lift up his eyes*, and see the *four horns*, and saw them so formidable that he began to despair of the safety of every good man, and the success of every good work; but the Lord then *shewed him four carpenters or smiths*, that were empowered to cut off these horns, *ver.* 20, 21. With an *eye of sense* we see the power of the enemies of the church; look which way we will the world shews us that; but it is with an *eye of faith* that we see it safe notwithstanding: It is the Lord that *shews us that*, as he opened the eyes of the prophet's servant to see the angelick guards round about his master, *2 Kings* vi. 17. Observe those that were to *fray*, or *break*, the horns of the Gentiles, and to cast them out were, (1.) *Carpenters*, or *smiths*, (for they are supposed by some to have been horns of iron) men that had skill and ability to do it; whose proper business it was, and who understood their business, and had tools at hand to do it with. Note, God calls those to serve the interests of his church, whom he either finds or makes fit for it. If there be *horns* against the church, which speak the force and fury of beasts, there are *carpenters* for the church, which speaks the wisdom and forecast of men by which they find ways to master the strongest beasts, for *every kind of beasts is tamed, and has been tamed of mankind*, *Jam.* iii. 7. (2.) They were *four carpenters*: As many *horns*, so many *hands* to saw them off. Note, Which way soever the church is threatened with mischief, and opposition given to its interests, God can find out ways and means to check the force, to restrain the wrath, and make it turn to his praise. Some by these *four carpenters* understand Zerubbabel and Joshua, *Ezra* and Nehemiah, that carried on the work of God in despite of the opposition given to it. Those *horned beasts* broke into God's vineyard to tread it down, but the good magistrates and the good ministers whom God raised up, tho' they had not power to *cut off the horns of the wicked* as David did, *Psal.* lxxv. 5, 10. yet they *frightened them*, and *cast them out*.

Note, When God has work to do he will raise up some to *do it*, and others to *defend it*, and protect those that are employed in the doing of it.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Another vision which the prophet saw, not for his own entertainment, but for his satisfaction, and the edification of those to whom he was sent, *ver.* 1, 2. (2.) A sermon upon it, in the rest of the chapter; (1.) By way of explication of the vision, shewing it to be a prediction of the replenishing of Jerusalem, and of its safety and honour, *ver.* 3, 5. (2.) By way of application. Here is, (1.) A use of exhortation to the Jews that were yet in Babylon, pressing them to hasten their return to their own land, *ver.* 6—9. (2.) A use of consolation to those that were returned, in reference to the many difficulties they had to struggle with, *ver.* 10—11. (3.) A use of caution to all not to prescribe to God, or limit him, but patiently to wait for him, *ver.* 13.

1. **I** Lift up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring-line in his hand. 2. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. 3. And behold, the angel that talked with me, went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, 4. And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as

towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein. 5. For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

This prophet was ordered in God's name to assure the people, *chap.* i. 16. that a line should be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Now here we have that promise illustrated, and confirmed, that the prophet might deliver that part of his message to the people with the more clearness and assurance.

1. He sees in a vision a man going to measure Jerusalem, *ver.* 1, 2. He lift up his eyes again, and looked. God had shewed him that which was very encouraging to him, *chap.* i. 20. and therefore now he lift up his eyes again, and looked. Note, The comfortable sights which by faith we have had of God's goodness made to pass before us, should engage us to lift up our eyes again, and to search further into the discoveries made us of the divine grace; for there is still more to be seen. In the close of the foregoing chapter he had seen Jerusalem's enemies baffled and broken, so that now he begins to hope she shall not be ruined. But that is not enough to make her happy, and therefore that is not all that is promised: Here is more *carpenter's work* to be done. When David had resolved to cut off the horns of the wicked, he engaged likewise that the horns of the righteous should be exalted, *Psal.* xv. 10. And so doth the Son of David here; for he is the man, even the man Christ Jesus, whom the prophet sees with a measuring line in his hand; for he is the master-builder of his church, *Heb.* iii. 3. and he builds exactly by line and level. Zechariah took the boldness to ask him *whither he was going?* And what he designed to do with that measuring line? And he readily told him, he was going to measure Jerusalem; to take a particular account of the dimensions of it each way; that it might be computed what was necessary for the making a wall about it, and that it might appear by comparing its dimensions with the vast numbers that should inhabit it, what additions were necessary to be made, for the receiving and containing of them; when multitudes flock to Jerusalem (*Isa.* lx. 4.) it is time for her to enlarge the place of her tent, (*Isa.* liv. 2.) Note, God takes notice of the extent of his church, and will take care that whenever so many guests are brought in to the wedding-supper, yet still there shall be room, *Luke* xiv. 22. In the New Jerusalem, my Father's house above, there are many mansions.

2. He is informed that this vision means well to Jerusalem; that the measuring line he saw was not a line of confusion, as that *Isa.* xxxiv. 11. not a line to mete out for destruction as when God purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion, he stretched out a line, *Lam.* ii. 8. But it is as when he divided the inheritance by line, *Psal.* lxxviii. 55. The angel that talked with the prophet went forth as he designed to measure Jerusalem, but another angel went out to meet him, to desire that he would first explain this vision to the prophet, that it might not occasion him any uneasy speculations: Run, and speak to this young man (for, it seems, the prophet entered upon his prophecy when he was young, yet no man ought to despise his youth, when God thus highly honoured it). He is a young man, not experienced, and may be ready to fear the worst, therefore bid him hope the best; tell him that Jerusalem shall be both safe and great.

1. As safe and great as numbers of men can make it; *ver.* 4. Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, i. e. the inhabitants of it shall increase and multiply, and replenish it to admiration, so as to extend itself far beyond the present dimensions, which now there is an account taken of. The walls of a city as they defend it, so they straiten and confine it, and keep its inhabitants from multiplying beyond such a pitch; but Jerusalem, even when it is walled to keep off the enemy, yet shall be inhabited as towns without walls; the city shall be in a manner lost in the suburbs, as London is, where the out-parishes are more populous than those within the walls; so shall it with Jerusalem; it shall be extended as freely as if it had no walls at all, and yet shall be as safe as if it had the strongest walls, such a multitude of men (which are the best walls of a city) shall there be therein; and of cattle too, to be not only food, but wealth too for those men. Note, The increase of the numbers of a people is a great blessing, is a fruit of God's blessing on them, and an earnest of further blessings, *Psal.* cvii. 38. They are multiplied, for he blesteth them.

2. As safe and great as the presence of God can make it, *ver.* 5. (1.) It shall be safe, for God himself will be a wall of fire round about it: Jerusalem had no walls about it at this time, but lay naked and exposed; formerly when it had walls the enemies not only broke through them but broke them down, but now God will be unto her a wall of fire. Some think it alludes to shepherds that made fires about their flocks, or travellers that made fires about their tents in desert places, to frighten wild beasts from them. God will not only make a hedge about them, as he did about Job, *chap.* i. 10. not only make walls and bulwarks about them, *Isa.* xxvi. 1. Those may be battered down; not only be as the mountains round about them, *Psal.* cxxv. 2. (mountains may be got over) but he will be a wall of fire round them, which can neither be broken through, nor scaled, nor undermined, nor the foundations of it sapped, nor can it be attempted or approached

proached without danger to the assailants. God will not only make a wall of fire about her, but he will himself be such a wall, for *our God is a consuming fire* to his and his church's enemies. He is a *wall of fire*, not on one side only, but *round about*, on every side. (2.) It shall be *great*, for God himself *will be the glory in the midst of it*. His temple, his altar, shall be set up and attended there, and his institutions observed, and there then shall the tokens of his special presence and favour be, which will be the *glory in the midst of them*, will make them truly admirable in the eyes of all about them. God will have honour from them, and put honour upon them. Note, Those that have God for their God, have him for their glory; that have him *in the midst of them*, have glory *in the midst of them*, and thence the church is said to be *all glorious within*. And those persons and places that have God to be the *glory in the midst of them*, have him for a *wall of fire round about them*, for *upon all that glory there is*, and shall be, a *defence*, Isa. iv. 5. Now all this was fulfilled in part, in that Jerusalem in process of time became a very flourishing city, and made a very great figure in those parts of the world, much beyond what could have been expected, considering how low it was brought, and how long it was ere it recovered itself. But it was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, which is extended far as towns without walls, by the admission of the Gentiles into it; and which hath God, the Son of God, for its prince and protector.

6. ¶ Ho, ho, *come forth*, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. 7. Deliver thy self, O Zion, that dwellest *with the daughter of Babylon*. 8. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you, for he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye. 9. For behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me.

One would have thought Cyrus's proclamation which gave liberty to the captive Jews to return to their own land, should have sufficed to bring them all back, and that as when Pharaoh gave them leave to quit Egypt and their house of bondage there, they should not have left a hoof behind; but, it seems, it had not that effect: There were about forty thousand whose spirits God stirred up to go, and they went; but many, perhaps the greater part, stayed behind; the land of their captivity was to most of them the land of their nativity, they had taken root there, had *gained a settlement*, and many of them a very comfortable one; some perhaps had got estates and preferments there, and they did not think they could mend themselves by returning to their own land; *Patria est ubicunque bene est*. They had no great affection to their own land, and apprehended the difficulties in their way to it insuperable. This proceeded from an *ill cause*, a distrust of the power and promise of God, a love of ease, and worldly wealth, and an indifferency to the religion of their country, and to the God of Israel himself; and it had an *ill effect*, for it was an implicit censure of those as foolish and rash, and given to change that did return, and a weakening of their hands in the work of God; such as these could not sing *Psal. cxxxvii.* in their captivity, for they had *forgot thee, O Jerusalem*, and were so far from preferring thee before their chief joy, that they preferred any joy before thee. Here is therefore another proclamation issued out by the God of Israel, strictly charging and commanding all his free-born subjects, wherever they were dispersed, speedily to return into their own land, and render themselves at their respective posts there: They are loudly summoned, *ver. 6. Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord.* This fitly follows upon the promise of the rebuilding and enlarging of Jerusalem: If God will build it for them and their comfort, they must come and inhabit it for him, and his glory, and not continue sneaking in Babylon. Note, The promises and privileges with which God's people are blessed, should engage us whatever it cost us to join ourselves to them, and *cast in our lot among them*. When Zion is enlarged to make room for all God's Israel, it is the greatest madness imaginable for any of them to stay in Babylon. The captivity of a sinful state is by no means to be continued in, though a man be never so easy upon temporal accounts, no, *come forth, and flee* with all speed, and lose no time! *Escape for thy life, look not behind thee.*

To induce them to hasten their return, let them consider,

1. They are now *dispersed*, and were concerned to *incorporate* themselves for their mutual common defence, *ver. 6. I have spread you abroad as the four winds of heaven*; sent some into one corner of the world, and some into another, and this has been your condition a long time, and therefore you should now think of coming together again, to help one another. God owns that his *scattering* them was in wrath, and therefore they must take

this invitation as a token of God's being willing to be reconciled to them again; so that they kicked at his kindness in refusing to accept the call.

2. They are now *in bondage*, and were concerned to *assert* their own liberty, and therefore *deliver thyself, O Zion*, flee from the oppressor, and make the best of thy way. Let us see some such bold efforts and struggles to help thyself as become the generous, gracious seed of Abraham, *ver. 7.* Note, When Christ has proclaimed that deliverance to the captives which he has himself wrought out, it then concerns each of us to *deliver ourselves*, to *loose ourselves from the bonds of our necks*, Isa. lli. 2. and since we are under grace, to resolve that *sin shall not have dominion over us*. Zion herself is here said to *dwell with the daughter of Babylon*, because many of the *precious sons of Zion* dwelt there; and where the people of God are, there the church of God is, for it is not tied to places. Now it is not fit that Zion should *dwell with the daughter of Babylon*, what communion can light have with darkness? Zion will be in danger of partaking with the *daughter of Babylon*, both *in her sins*, and *in her plagues*, and therefore *come out of her, my people*, Rev. xviii. 4. *Deliver thyself, O Zion*, by a speedy return to thy own land, and do not *destroy thyself* by continuing in that polluted, devoted land. Those that would be found among the generation of God's children, must *save themselves* from the *untoward generation* of this world; it was St Peter's charge to his new converts, *Acts ii. 40.*

3. They have seemed to be *forfaken and forgotten* of God, but God will now make it to appear that he *espouseth* their cause, and will *plead it* with jealousy, *ver. 8, 9.* It was a discouragement to those who remained in Babylon, to hear of the difficulties and oppositions which their brethren met with that were returned, by which they were still in danger of being crushed and overpowered. And we had as good sit still (think they) as rise up and fall. In answer to this objection, the *angel that talked with the prophet*, that is, Jesus Christ, tells him what he had commission to do, for their protection, and the perfecting of their salvation, and herein has an eye to the great redemption which in the fulness of time he was to be the author of. Christ, who is Jehovah, and the *Lord of hosts*, of all the *hosts of heaven and earth*, in both which he has a sovereign power, *saith, He, i. e. the Father, hath sent me.* Note, What Jesus Christ hath done, and doth for his church against his enemies, he was sent and commissioned by the Father to do. With great satisfaction he often speaks of *the Father that sent him*.

1. He is sent *after the glory*. After the *glorious* beginning of their deliverance he is sent to perfect it, for he is the finisher of that work, which he is the author of. Christ is sent in the first place to the nation and people of the Jews, to whom *pertained the glory*, Rom. ix. 4. And he was himself the *glory of his people Israel*. But *after the glory*, after his care of them he is *sent to the nations*, to be a *light to lighten the Gentiles*, by the power of his gospel to captivate them and bring them, and every high thought among them, into obedience to himself.

2. He is sent *to the nations that spoiled them*, to take vengeance on them for the wrongs done to Zion, when the year of his redeemed comes, and the *year of recompences for the controversy of Zion*, Isa. xxxiv. 8. He is sent to *shake his hands upon them*, to lift up his mighty hand against them, and to lay upon them his heavy hand, to *bruise them with a rod of iron*, and *dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*, *Psal. ii. 9.* Some think it intimates how easily God can subdue and humble them; with the turn of his hand; it is but *shaking his hand* over them, and the work is done. *They shall be a spoil to their servants*, shall be enslaved to those whom they had enslaved; and be plundered by those they had plundered. In Esther's time this was fulfilled when the *Jews had rule over them that hated them*, *Esth. ix. 1.* And often in the time of the Maccabees: And the promise is further fulfilled in Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies, his *spoiling principalities and powers*, and *making a shew of them openly*, Col. ii. 15. And it is still in force to the gospel church; Christ will reckon with all that are enemies to it, and sooner or later will make them his *footstool*, *Psal. cx. 1.* Rev. iii. 9.

3. What he will do for his church shall be an evident proof of God's tender care of it, and affection to it. *He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.* This is a high expression of God's love to his church: By his resentment of the injuries done to her it appears how dear she is to him, how he interests himself in all her interests, and takes what is done against her, not only as done against himself, but as done against the very *apple of his eye*, the tenderest part which nature has made very fine, has put a double guard upon, and taught us to be in a special manner careful of, and which the *least touch* is a great offence to. This encourageth the people of God to pray with David, *Psal. xvii. 8. Keep me as the apple of thine eye*; and engageth them to do as Solomon directs, *Prov. vii. 2. to keep his law as the apple of their eye.* Some understand it thus; *He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his own eye*; whoever do you any injury will prove in the issue to have done the greatest injury to themselves.

4. It shall be an evident proof of Christ's mission: *Ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me* to be the protector of his church; that the promises made to the church are yea and amen in

in him. Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies proves that the Father sent him, and was with him.

10. ¶ Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. 11. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee. 12. And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. 13. Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

Here is, 1. Joy proclaimed to the church of God; to the daughter of Zion, that had separated herself from the daughter of Babylon. The Jews that were returned were in distress and danger, their enemies in the neighbourhood were spiteful against them, their friends that remained in Babylon were cool towards them, shy of them, and declined coming in to their assistance, and yet they are bid to sing, and to rejoice even in tribulation. Note, Those that have recovered their purity, and integrity, and spiritual liberty, though they have not yet recovered their outward prosperity, have reason to sing and rejoice; to give glory to God, and take comfort to themselves.

1. God will have a people among them: If their brethren in Babylon will not come to them, those of other nations shall, and shall replenish Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, that are now at a distance from him, and strangers to him. The Jewish nation, after the captivity multiplied very much by the accession of proselytes to it, that were naturalized, and were entitled to all the privileges of native Israelites, and perhaps they were equal in number: And therefore Paul mentions it as an honour to him which many Jews had not, that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, Phil. iii. 5. And this was an earnest of the bringing in of the Gentiles into the Christian church; and in that this and other like promises were to have their full accomplishment. It was therefore strange that that should be so great an offence to the Jews as we find in the apostles times, which was promised them as a blessing in the prophets times that many nations should be joined to the Lord. And as there had been one law, so should there be one gospel for the stranger and those born in the land; whatever nation they come from, when they join themselves to the Lord they shall be my people, as dear to God as ever Israel had been. Note, God will own those for his people that with purpose of heart join themselves to him; and when many do so, we ought to look upon them not with a jealous eye, but with a joyful one. Angels rejoice, and therefore so should the daughter of Zion, when many nations are joined to the Lord.

2. They shall have his presence among them. Sing and rejoice, for I come: those to whom God comes have reason to rejoice, for he will be to them their chief joy. God will come not to make them a visit only, but to reside with them, and preside over them; I will dwell in the midst of thee, ver. 10. and it is repeated, ver. 11. because it was to have a double accomplishment; (1.) In the dedication of the temple, in their regular observing all God's institutions there, and God's owning them therein. Those God dwelling in the midst of them, that have his ordinances administered in their purity, and a divine power going along with them; with these tokens of God's presence the Jewish church was blessed after this as much as ever. (2.) In the incarnation of Christ. He that here promiseth to dwell among them is that Lord, whom the Lord of hosts hath sent, ver. 11. and therefore must be the Lord Jesus, who came and dwelt in the midst of the Jewish nation, the eternal Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among us. This was the great honour reserved for that nation in its last days; the promise of it effectually secured their continuance till it was accomplished. They could not be destroyed while that blessing was in them: and the prospect of it according to the promise was the great support and comfort to them who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. It is promised that when Christ comes and dwells among them, they shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent him; all that were Israelites indeed were made to know it; sufficient proofs were given of it by the miracles Christ wrought, so that they might have known it, and yet there were those that perished in ignorance and unbelief; that would not know it, for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

3. They shall have all their ancient dignities and privileges restored to them again, ver. 12. (1.) Canaan shall be a holy land again; not polluted by sin as it had been formerly, not profaned by the enemies as it had been of late; it shall be an inclosure again, and not laid in common. (2.) Judah shall be in this holy land, shall inhabit it, and enjoy the comfort of it, and no longer be lost and scattered in Babylon. (3.) Judah shall be God's portion which he will delight in, which shall be dear to him, by which he will be served, and in which he will be glorified. The No. lxxvii.

Lord's portion is his people. (4.) God will inherit Judah again as his portion; will claim his interest, and recover the possession out of the hands of those that had invaded his right. He will protect his people, and govern them as a man doth his inheritance, and will be at home among them. (5.) He will choose Jerusalem again, as he had chosen it formerly to put his name there, will renew and confirm the choice, and continue it a chosen place till it must resign its honours to the Jerusalem that is from above. Tho' the election seemed to be set aside for a while, yet it shall obtain.

2. Here is silence proclaimed to all the world beside, ver. 13. The daughter of Zion must sing, but all flesh must be silent. Observe here, (1.) A very awful description of God's appearances for the relief of his people. He is raised up out of his holy habitation; as a man out of sleep, Psal. xlv. 23.—lxxviii. 65. or as a man entering with resolution upon a business that he will go through with. Heaven is his holy habitation above, thence we must expect him to appear, Isa. lxiv. 1. His temple is so in this lower world, thence from between the cherubim he will shine forth, Psal. lxxx. 1. He is about to do something unusual, unexpected, and very surprizing, and to plead his peoples cause, which had long seemed neglected. (2.) A seasonable caution, and direction at such a time. Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord; before Christ and his grace, let not flesh object against the methods he takes; before God and his providence, the enemies of the church shall be silenced, all iniquity shall stop her mouth; the friends of the church must be silent. Leave it to God to take his own way, and neither prescribe to him what he should do, nor quarrel with him whatever he doth. Be still, and know that he is God. Stand still and see his salvation. See Hab. ii. 20. Zeph. i. 7. Silently acquiesce in his holy will, and patiently wait the issue, as those that are assured when God is raised up out of his holy habitation, he will not retreat or sit down again, till he has accomplished his whole work.

C H A P. III.

The vision in the foregoing chapter gave assurances of the re-establishing of the civil interests of the Jewish nation, the promises of which terminated in Christ. Now the vision in this chapter concerns their church-state, and their ecclesiastical interests, and assures them that they shall be put into a good pasture again; and the promises of this also have an eye to Christ, who is not only our prince but the high-priest of our profession, of whom Joshua was a type. Here is, 1. A vision relating to Joshua, as the representative of the church in his time, representing the disadvantages he laboured under, and the people in him, with the redress of the grievances of both. (1.) He is accused by Satan, but is brought off by Christ, ver. 1, 2. (2.) He appears in filthy garments, but had them changed, ver. 3, 4, 5. (3.) He is assured of being established in his office if he carry himself well, ver. 6, 7. 2. A sermon relating to Christ, who is here called the Branch, who should be endued with all perfections for his undertaking, should be carried triumphantly through it, and by whom we should have pardon and peace, ver. 8, 10.

1. **A**ND he shewed me Joshua the high priest, standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. 2. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan, even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee: is not this a brand pluckt out of the fire? 3. Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. 4. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. 5. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head: so they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments; and the angel of the LORD stood by. 6. And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, 7. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.

There was a Joshua that was a principal agent in the first settling of Israel in Canaan: here is another of the same name very active in their second settlement there after the captivity; Jesus

Jesus is the same name, and it signifies a Saviour ; and they were both figures of him that was to come our chief captain, and our chief priest. The angel that talked, with *Zechariah shewed him Joshua the high-priest* ; it is likely the prophet saw him frequently, and spoke to him, and there was a great intimacy between them ; but in his common views he only saw how he appeared before men ; if he must know how he *stands before the Lord*, it must be shewed him in vision ; and so it is shewed him. And so men are really as they are with God, not as they appear in the eye of the world. He stood *before the angel of the Lord*, i. e. before Christ, the Lord of the angels, to whom even the high priests themselves of Aaron's order were accountable. He stood *before the angel of the Lord* to execute his office, to minister to God under the inspection of the angels. He stood to consult the oracle on the behalf of Israel, whom, as high-priest, he was agent for.

Guilt and corruption are our two great discouragements when we stand before God. By the guilt of the sins committed by us, we are become *obnoxious* to the justice of God ; by the power of the sin that dwelleth in us, we are become *odious* to the holiness of God. All God's Israel are in danger upon these two accounts : Joshua was so here, for *the law made men priests that had infirmity*, Heb. vii. 28. And as to both we have relief from Jesus Christ, who is made of God to us both *righteousness*, and *sanctification*.

1. Joshua is accused as a criminal, but is *justified*. (1.) A *violent opposition* is made to him. *Satan stands at his right hand to resist him* ; to be a *Satan to him, a law-adversary*. He stands *at his right hand*, as the prosecutor or witness at the *right hand* of the prisoner. Note, The devil is the accuser of the brethren, that *accuseth them before God day and night*, Rev. xii. 10. Some think the chief priest was accused for the sin of many of the inferior priests in marrying strange wives, which they were much guilty of after their return out of captivity, *Ezra ix. 1, 2. Neh. xiii. 28*. When God is about to re-establish the priesthood, Satan objects the sins that were found among the priests, as rendering them unworthy the honour designed them. It is by our own folly that we give Satan advantage against us, and furnish him with matter for reproach and accusation : and if any thing be amiss, especially with the priests, Satan will be sure to aggravate it and make the worst of it. He stood *to resist him*, i. e. to oppose the service he was doing for the publick good. He stood *at his right hand*, the hand of action, to discourage him, and raise difficulties in his way. Note, When we stand before God to minister to him, or stand up for God to serve his interests, we must expect to meet with all the resistance that Satan's subtilty and malice can give us. Let us then *resist him* that resists us, and he shall flee from us.

(2.) A *victorious defence* is made for him, ver. 2. *The Lord, i. e. the Lord Christ, said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee*. Note, It is the happiness of the saints that the judge is their friend ; the same that they are accused to is their patron and protector, and an advocate for them, and he will be sure to bring them off. (1.) Satan is here *checked*, by one that has authority, that has conquered him and many a time silenced him. *The accuser of the brethren*, of the ministers, and the ministry, is *cast out*, his indictments quashed, and his suggestions against them, as well as his suggestions to them, shewed to be malicious, frivolous, and vexatious. *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. The Lord said it, i. e. the Lord our Redeemer, the Lord rebuke thee, i. e. the Lord the Creator*. The power of God is engaged for the making of the grace of Christ effectual. *The Lord restrain thy malicious rage, reject thy malicious charge, and revenge upon thee thine enmity to a servant of his*. Note, Those that belong to Christ have him ready to appear vigorously for them, then when Satan appears most *vehement* against them. He doth not parley with him, but stops his mouth immediately with this sharp reprimand, *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan*. This is the best way of dealing with that furious enemy, *Get thee behind me, Satan*. (2.) Satan is here *argued with*. He resists the priest, but let him know that his resistance, (1.) Will be *fruitless* ; it will be to no purpose to attempt any thing against Jerusalem, for *the Lord hath chosen it*, and he will abide by his choice. Whatever is objected against God's people, God saw it, he foresaw it when he chose them, and yet he chose them, and therefore that can be no inducement to him now to reject them ; he knew the worst of them when he chose them ; and his *election shall obtain*. (2.) It is *unreasonable* : for *is not this a brand plucked out of the fire* ? Joshua is so, and the priesthood, and the people whose representative he is. Christ has not that to say for them for which they are to be *praised*, but that for which they are to be *pitied*. Note, Christ is ready to make the best of his people, and takes notice of every thing that is pleadable in excuse of their infirmities, so far is he from being extreme to mark what they do amiss. They have been lately *in the fire*, no wonder they are black and smoked, and have the smell of the fire upon them, but they are therefore to be *excused*, not to be *accused*. One can expect no other but that those, who but the other day were captives in Babylon, should appear very mean and despicable. They have been lately brought out of great affliction, and is Satan so barbarous as to desire to have them thrown into affliction again ? They have been

wonderfully delivered *out of the fire*, that God might be glorified in them, and will he then cast them off, and abandon them ? No, he will not quench the smoking flax, the smoking fire-brand, for he snatched it out of the fire, because he intended to make use of it. Note, Narrow escapes from imminent danger are happy prefaces and powerful pleas for more eminent favours. A converted soul is a *brand plucked out of the fire* by a miracle of free grace, and therefore shall not be left to be a prey to Satan.

2. Joshua appears as one *polluted*, but is *purified* ; for he represents the Israel of God who are all *as an unclean thing*, till they are washed and sanctified *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, and *by the Spirit of our God*. Now observe here,

1. The impurity wherein Joshua appeared, ver. 3. *He was clothed not only in coarse, but in filthy garments*, such as did very ill become the dignity of his office, and the sanctity of his work. By the law of Moses the garments of the high-priest were to be *for glory and for beauty*, Exod. xxviii. 2. But Joshua's garments were a shame and reproach to him, yet in them he stood *before the angel of the Lord* ; he had no clean linen wherein to minister, and do the duty of his place. Now this intimates not only that the priesthood was poor and despised, and loaded with contempt, but that there was a great deal of iniquity cleaving to the holy things. The returned Jews were so *taken up with their troubles*, that they thought they needed not complain of *their sins*, and were not aware those were the great hindrances of the progress of God's work among them ; because they were free from idolatry, they thought themselves chargeable with no iniquity, but God shews them there were many things amiss in them, which *retarded* the advances of God's favours towards them. There were spiritual enemies warring against them more dangerous than any of the neighbour nations. The Chaldee paraphrase saith, Joshua had sons who took unto them wives, which were not lawful for the priests to take ; and we find it was so, *Ezra x. 18*. And no doubt there were other things amiss in the priesthood, *Mal. ii. 1*. yet Joshua was permitted to *stand before the angel of the Lord*. Tho' his children did not as they should, yet the covenant of priesthood was not broken. Note, Christ bears with his people whose hearts are upright with him, and admits them into communion with himself notwithstanding their manifold infirmities.

2. The provision that was made for his cleansing. Christ gave orders to the angels that attended him, and were ready to do his pleasure to put Joshua into a better state. Joshua presented himself before the Lord in his *filthy garments*, as an object of his pity ; and Christ graciously looked upon him *with compassion*, and not, as justly he might have done, *with indignation*. Christ loathed the filthiness of Joshua's garments, yet did not put him away, but put them away. Thus God by his grace doth with those whom he chuseth to be priests to himself, he parts between them and their sins, and so prevents their sins parting between them and their God ; reconciles himself to the sinner, but not to the sin.

Two things are here done for Joshua, representing a double work of divine grace wrought in and for believers.

(1.) His *filthy garments are taken from him*, ver. 4. the meaning of which is given us in what Christ said, and he said it as one having authority, *Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee*. The guilt of it is taken away by pardoning mercy, the stink and stain of it, by peace spoken to the conscience, and the power of it broken by renewing grace. When God forgives our sins he *causeth our iniquity to pass from us*, that it may not appear against us to condemn us ; it *passeth from us, as far as the east is from the west* ; when he sanctifies the nature he enables us to *put off the old man*, to cast away from us the *filthy rags* of our corrupt affections and lusts, as things we will never have any thing more to do with, will never gird to us, or appear in. Thus Christ *washeth those from their sins in his own blood*, whom he makes to our God *kings and priests*, Rev. i. 5, 6. Either we must be cleansed from the pollutions of sin, or we shall, *as polluted, be put from that priesthood*, Ezra ii. 62.

(2.) He is *clothed anew*, has not only the shame of his filthiness removed, but the shame of his nakedness covered. *I will clothe thee with change of raiment*. Joshua had no clean linen of his own, but Christ will provide for him, for he will not let a priesthood of his own instituting be lost, be either contemptible before men, or unacceptable before God. The *change of raiment* here, is rich, costly raiment, such as is worn on high days ; Joshua shall appear as lovely as ever he appeared loathsome : they that minister in holy things shall not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well ; God will make them wise, and humble, and diligent, and faithful, and examples of every thing that is good ; and then Joshua is *clothed with change of raiment*. Thus those whom Christ makes spiritual priests are clothed with the spotless robe of his righteousness, and appear before God in that ; and with the graces of his Spirit, which are ornaments to them. The *righteousness of saints* both imputed and implanted is the fine linen, clean and white, with which *the bride the Lamb's wife* is arrayed, Rev. xix. 8.

3. Joshua is in danger of being turned out of office, but instead of that he is *re-installed*, and *established* in his office. He not

not only hath his sins pardoned, and is furnished with grace sufficient for himself, but as *reclus in curia*, he is restored to his former honours and trusts.

1. The *crown of the priesthood* is put upon him, *ver. 5*. This was done at the special instance and request of the prophet, I said, *Let them set a fair mitre upon his head*, as a badge of his office. Now he looks *clean*, let him also look *great*: Let him be dressed up in all the garments of the high-priest. Note, When God designs the restoring and reviving of religion, he stirs up his prophets and people to pray for it, and doth it in answer to their prayers. Zechariah prayed that the angels might be ordered to set the mitre on Joshua's head, and they did it immediately, and *clothed him with the priestly garments*; for no man took this honour to himself, but he that was *called of God* to it. The *angel of the Lord stood by*, as having the oversight of the work, which the created angels were employed in. He *stood by* as one well pleased with it, and resolved to *stand by* the orders he had given for the doing of it, and to continue his presence with that priesthood.

2. The *covenant of the priesthood* is renewed with him, which is called God's covenant of peace, *Numb. xxv. 12*. Mr Pemble calls it the patent of his office, which is here declared and delivered to him before witnesses, *ver. 6, 7*. The angel of the Lord having taken care to make him fit for his office, (and all that God calls to any office he either finds them fit, or makes them so) invests him in it. And tho' he is not *made a priest with an oath*, that honour is reserved for him who is a priest after the order of Melchisedek, *Heb. vii. 21*. yet being a type of him he is inaugurated with a solemn declaration of the terms, upon which he held his office. The angel of the Lord protested to Joshua, that if he would be sure to do the duty of his place, he should enjoy the dignity and reward of it. Now see,

1. What the conditions are upon which he enters into his office. Let him know that he is upon his *good behaviour*, he must *walk in God's ways*; *i. e.* he must live a good life, and be holy in all manner of conversation; must go before the people in the paths of God's commandments, and walk circumspectly. He must also *keep God's charge*, must carefully do all the services of the priesthood, and must see to it that the inferior priests performed the duties of their place, decently and in order. He must *take heed to himself*, and to *all the flock*, *Acts xx. 28*. Note, Good ministers must be good Christians, yet that is not enough, they have a trust committed to them, they are *charged* with it, and they must *keep* it with all possible care; that they may give up their account of it with joy, *1 Tim. vi. 14*.

2. What the privileges are which he may expect and be assured of, in the due discharge of his office. His patent runs, *Quam diu se bene gesserit*: Let him be sure to do his part, and God will own him. (1.) *Thou shalt judge mine house*, *i. e.* Thou shalt preside in the affairs of the temple, and the inferior priests shall be under thy direction. Note, The power of the church and of church-rulers is not a *legislative*, but only a *judicial* power. The high-priest might not make any new laws for God's house, nor ordain any other rites of worship than what God had ordained, but he must *judge God's house*, *i. e.* he must see to it that God's laws and ordinances were punctually observed, must protect and encourage those that did observe them, and enquire into and punish the violation of them. (2.) *Thou shalt also keep my courts*, *i. e.* thou shalt have the oversight of what is done in all the courts of the temple, and shalt keep them pure, and in good order for the worship to be performed in them. Note, Ministers are God's *stewards*, and they are to *keep his courts*, in honour of him who is the chief Lord, and for the preserving of equity and good order among his tenants. (3.) *I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by*, *i. e.* among these angels that are inspectors and assistants in this instalment. They shall *stand by* while Joshua is at work for God, and shall be as a guard to him; or he shall be highly honoured and respected as an *angel of God*, *Gal. iv. 14*. Ministers are called *angels*, *Rev. i. 20*. They that *walk in God's ways* may be said to *walk among the angels* themselves, for they do the will of God as the angels do it that are in heaven, and are their *fellow-servants*, *Rev. xix. 10*. Some make it a promise of eternal life, and of a reward of his fidelity in the future state. Heaven is not only a *palace*, a place to repose in, but a *paradise*, a garden, a place to *walk in*; and they are walks among the angels, in society with that holy and glorious company. See *Ezek. xxviii. 14*.

8. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondrous at: for behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. 9. For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua: upon one stone shall be seven eyes, behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. 10. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call

every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree.

As the promises made to David oft slide insensibly into promises of the Messiah, whose kingdom David's was a type of, so the promises here made to Joshua presently rise as far upward, and look as far forward as to Christ, whose priesthood Joshua's was now a shadow of, not only in general as it kept up the line of Aaron's priesthood, but especially as it was the reviving of that happy method of correspondence between heaven and earth, to which a great interruption had been given by the iniquity and captivity of Israel. Christ is a high-priest, as Joshua was, for sinners and sufferers, to mediate for those that have been under guilt and wrath. And it was fit Joshua should understand the priesthood of Christ, because all the virtue of his priesthood, its value and usefulness to the church, depended upon, and was derived from the priesthood of Christ. See

1. To whom this promise of Christ is directed. *Ver. 8. Hear now, O Joshua*. Thou hast heard with pleasure what belongs to thy self, but behold a greater than Joshua is at hand, *hear now*, concerning him; *thou*, and the rest of the priests, *thy fellows that sit before thee*, at thy feet as learners, but whom thou art to look upon as *thy fellows*, for all ye are brethren; let the high-priest and all the inferior priests take notice of this; for they are *men wondrous at*. They are set *for signs*, *i. e.* for types and figures of Christ's priesthood: what God now did for Joshua and his fellows was a happy omen of the coming of the Messiah promised, and would be so interpreted with a pleasing wonder by all that had understanding of the times. Or they are *men wondrous at* for their singularity, hooted at as strange sort of people, because they *run not with others to the same excess of riot*, *1 Pet. iv. 4*. Or for their strange afflictions, and surprising deliverance out of them, as *Psal. lxxi. 7. I am as a wonder unto many*. They are *men of wonder*, they are a wonder to themselves, are amazed to think how happily their condition is altered. God's people and ministers are upon many accounts *men wondrous at*. The high-priest and his fellows here, as the prophet and his children; *Isa. viii. 18. are for signs and for wonders*. But mens wonder at them will cease when the Messiah comes, as the stars are eclipsed by the light of the sun, for his name shall be called *Wonderful*.

2. The promise itself, which consists of several parts, all designed for the comfort and encouragement of Joshua and his friends in that great good work of building the temple, which they were now engaged in. An eye to Christ, and a believing dependence upon the promises relating to him and his kingdom, would carry them thro' the difficulties they met with in that, and other their services.

1. The Messiah shall come. *Behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch*. He has been long hid, but the fulness of time is now at hand, when he shall be *brought forth* into the world, brought forth among his people Israel. God himself undertakes to *bring him forth*, and therefore, no doubt, he will own him and stand by him. He is God's *servant*, employed in his work, obedient to his will, and entirely devoted to his honour and glory. He is the *Branch*, so he was called, *Isa. iv. 2. The branch of the Lord*. *Isa. xi. 1. A branch out of the roots of Jesse*. *Jer. xxiii. 5. A righteous branch*, and *Jer. xxxiii. 15. The branch of righteousness*; whose beginning was small, as a tender branch, but in time should become a great tree, and fill the earth, *Isa. liii. 2*. He is the branch from which all our *fruit* must be gathered.

2. Many eyes shall be upon him. He is *the stone laid before Joshua*, alluding to the foundation or chief corner stone of the temple, which probably was laid with great solemnity in the presence of Joshua; Christ is not only the *branch* which is the beginning of a tree, but the *foundation* which is the beginning of a building, and when he shall be *brought forth*, *seven eyes shall be upon him*. The eye of his Father was upon him to take care of him, and protect him, especially in his sufferings; when he was *buried* in the grave, as the foundation-stones are under ground, yet the eyes of heaven were upon him; buried out of mens sight but not out of God's. The eyes of all the prophets and Old Testament saints were upon this one stone; Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he *saw it*, and *was glad*. The eyes of all believers are upon him; they look unto him and are saved, as the eyes of the stung Israelites were upon the brazen serpent. Some understand this *one stone* to have the seven eyes in it, as the wheels had in Ezekiel's vision, and think it notes that perfection of wisdom and knowledge which Jesus Christ was endued with for the good of his church; *his eyes run to and fro through the earth*.

3. God himself will beautify him, and put honour upon him. *I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts*. This stone the builders refused, as rough and unsightly, but God undertakes to smooth and polish it, nay, and to carve it, so as that it shall be the *head-stone of the corner*, the most beautiful in all the building. Christ was God's workmanship, and abundance of his wisdom appears in the contrivance of our redemption, which will appear when the *engraving is perfected*. This stone

is a *precious stone*, tho' laid for a *foundation*, and the *graving* of it seems to allude to the precious stones in the breast-plate of the high-priest, which had the names of the tribes *graven* upon them; as the *engraving of a signet*, Exod. xxviii. 21, 22. In that breast-plate there were twelve stones laid before Aaron, for ought appears those were lost: but there shall be one worth them all laid before Joshua; and that is Christ himself; this precious stone shall sparkle as if it had *seven eyes*; there shall appear a perfection of wisdom and prudence in the oracles that proceed from this breast-plate of judgment: and God will *engrave the engraving thereof*, he will intrust Christ with all his elect, and he shall appear as their representative, and agent for them, as the high-priest did when he went in before the Lord, with the names of all Israel engraven in the precious stones of his breast-plate. When God gave a remnant to Christ to be brought thro' grace to glory, then he *engraved the graving* of this *precious stone*.

4. By him sin shall be taken away, both the guilt and the dominion of it. *I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day*. When the high-priest had the name of Israel engraven on the precious stones he was adorned with, he is said to *bear the iniquity of the holy things*, Exod. xxviii. 38. but the law made *nothing perfect*, Heb. x. 1. He bore the iniquity of the land, as a type of Christ, but he could not *remove it*, the doing of that was reserved for Christ that blessed *Lamb of God*, that *taketh away the sin of the world*; and did it *in one day*, that day in which he suffered and died; that was done by the sacrifices offered *that day*, which could not be done by the sacrifices of ages before, no, not by all the *days of atonement* which from Moses to Christ returned every year. This agrees with the angel's prediction, *Dan. ix. 24. he shall finish transgressions, and make an end of sin*. And some make the engravings wherewith God engraved him to signify the wounds and stripes which were given to his blessed body which he underwent for our *transgression*, for our *iniquity*, and *by which we are healed*.

5. The effect of all this shall be the sweet enjoyment which all believers shall have of themselves, and the sweet communion they shall have with one another, *ver. 10. In that day ye shall call every man his neighbour under the vine, and the fig-tree*, which yield most pleasant fruit, and whose leaves also afford a refreshing shade for arbours. When *iniquity is taken away*, (1.) We reap precious benefits and privileges from our justification, more precious than the products of the *vine* or the *fig-tree*, Rom. v. 1. (2.) We repose our selves in a sweet tranquillity, and are quiet from the fear of evil. What should terrify us when iniquity is taken away, when nothing can hurt us? We sit down under Christ's shadow with delight, and by it are sheltered from the scorching heat of the curse of the law. We live as Israel in the peaceable reign of Solomon, *1 Kings iv. 24, 25. for he is the prince of peace*. (3.) We ought to invite others to come to partake with us in the enjoyment of these privileges, to *call every man his neighbour* to come and sit with him, for mutual converse under the vine and fig-tree, and to share with him in the fruits he is surrounded with. Gospel grace as far as it comes with power makes men *neighbourly*: and those that have the comfort of acquaintance with Christ themselves, and communion with God, through him will be forward to court others to it. *Let us go unto the house of the Lord*.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter we have another comfortable vision, which, as it was explained to the prophet, had much in it for the encouragement of the people of God in their present straits, which were so great that they thought their case helpless; that their temple could never be rebuilt, nor their city replenished; and therefore the scope of the vision is to shew that God would, by his own power, *perfect the work*, tho' the assistance given to it by its friends were never so weak, and the resistance given to it by its enemies were never so strong. Here is, (1.) The awakening of the prophet to observe the vision, *ver. 1.* (2.) The vision itself, of a candlestick with seven lamps, which were supplied with oil, and kept burning, immediately from two olive trees that grew by it, one on either side, *ver. 2, 3.* (3.) The general encouragement hereby intended to be given to the builders of the temple to go on in that good work, assuring them that it should be brought to perfection at last, *ver. 4—10.* (4.) The particular explication of the vision for the illustration of these assurances, *ver. 11—14.*

1. **A**ND the angel that talked with me, came again and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, 2. And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold, a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven

pipes to the seven lamps, which were upon the top thereof: 3. And two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. 4. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? 5. Then the angel that talked with me, answered, and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. 6. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit saith the LORD of hosts. 7. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain, and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it. 8. Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 9. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. 10. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoyce, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven, they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

Here is, 1. The prophet prepared to receive the discovery that was to be made him. *The angel that talked with him came and waked him*, *ver. 1.* It seems, though he was in conference with an angel, and about matters of great and publick concern, yet he grew dull and was dropt asleep, as it should seem, while the angel was yet talking with him. Thus the disciples, when they saw Christ transfigured, were *heavy with sleep*, Luke ix. 32. The prophet's spirit, no doubt, was willing to have attended to that which was to be seen and heard, but the flesh was weak; his body could not keep pace with his soul in divine contemplations; the strangeness of the visions perhaps stupified him, and so he was overcome with sleep, or perhaps the sweetness of the visions composed him, and even sung him asleep. Daniel was in a deep sleep, when he heard the voice of the angels words, *Dan. x. 9.* We shall never be fit for converse with spirits till we are got clear of these bodies of flesh. It should seem, the angel let him lose himself a little, that he might be fresh to receive new discoveries, but then waked him to his surprize as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. Note, We need the Spirit of God not only to make known to us divine things, but to make us take notice of them. *He wakens morning by morning, he wakens mine ear*. Isa. l. 4. We should beg of God that whenever he speaks to us he would awaken us, and we should then stir up ourselves.

2. The discovery that was made to him when he was thus prepared. The angel asked him, *what seest thou?* *ver. 2.* When he was awake, perhaps he had not taken notice of what was presented to his view, if he had not thus been excited to look about him. When he observed, he saw a golden candlestick; such an one as was in the temple formerly, and with the like this temple should in due time be furnished. The church is a candlestick, set up for the enlightening this dark world, and the holding forth of the light of divine revelation to it; the candle is God's, the church is but the candlestick; but all of gold, noting the great worth and excellency of the church of God. This golden candlestick had seven lamps branching out from it, so many sockets, in each of which was a burning and shining light. The Jewish church was but one, and though the Jews that were dispersed, it is probable, had synagogues in other countries, yet they were but as so many lamps belonging to one candlestick; but now under the gospel, Christ is the center of unity, and not Jerusalem or any one place, and therefore seven particular churches are represented not as seven lamps, but as seven several golden candlesticks, *Rev. i. 20.* This candlestick had one bowl, or common receiver, on the top, into which oil was continually dropping, and from it, by seven secret pipes or passages, it was diffused to the seven lamps. So that without any further care they received oil as fast as they wasted it, (as in those which we call fountain inkhorns, or fountain pens) never wanted, nor were ever glutted, and so kept always burning clear. And the bowl too was continually supplied without any care or attendance of man; for, *ver. 3.* he saw two olive-trees, one on each side the candlestick, that were so fat and fruitful, that of their own accord they poured plenty of oil continually into the bowl, which by two larger pipes, *ver. 12.* dispersed the oil to lesser ones, and so to the lamps. So that no body needed to attend this candlestick, to furnish it with oil, it tarried not for man, nor waited for the sons of men; the scope of which is to shew that God easily can, and often doth accomplish his gracious purposes concerning his church by his own wisdom and power, without any art or labour of man. And though sometimes he makes use of instruments, yet he neither needs them, nor is tied to them, but can do his work without them, and will rather than it shall be undone.

3. The enquiry which the prophet made concerning the meaning of this, and the gentle reproof given him for his dulness, *ver. 4. I answered and spake to the angel, saying, What are these, my lord?* Observe how respectfully he speaks to the angel, he called him *my lord*; those that would be taught must give honour to their teachers; he saw what these *were*, but asked what these *signified*? Note, It is very desirable to know the meaning of God's manifestations of himself and his mind, both in his word, by his ordinances, and providences; *what mean ye by these services, by these signs?* And those that would understand the mind of God must be inquisitive; *then shall we know, if we follow on to know*, if we not only hear, but as Christ *ask questions*, upon what we hear, *Luke ii. 46.* The angel answered him with a question, *Knowest thou not what these be?* Intimating, that if he had considered and compared spiritual things with spiritual, he might have guessed at the meaning of these things; for he knew that there was a golden candlestick in the tabernacle, which it was the priests constant business to supply with oil, and to keep it burning for the use of the tabernacle, when therefore he saw in vision such a candlestick with lamps always kept burning, and yet no priests to attend it, nor any occasion for them; he might discern the meaning of this to be, that though God had set up the priesthood again, yet he could carry on his own work for and in his people without them. Note, We have reason to be ashamed of ourselves that we do not more readily apprehend the meaning of divine discoveries. The angel asked the prophet this question, to draw from him an acknowledgment of his own dulness and darkness, and slowness to understand, and he had it presently, *I said, no, my lord; I know not what these be.* Visions had their significancy, but often dark and hard to be understood, and the prophets themselves were not always aware of it at first. But those that would be taught of God must see and acknowledge their own ignorance, and their need to be taught, and must apply themselves to God for instruction. To him that gave us the cabinet, we must apply ourselves for the key wherewith to unlock it. God will teach the meek and humble, not those who are conceited of themselves, and lean on the broken reed of their own understanding.

4. The general intendment of this vision. Without a critical descant upon every circumstance of the vision, the design of it is to assure the prophet, and by him the people, that this good work of building the temple, should, by the special care of the divine providence, and the immediate influence of the divine grace, be brought to a happy issue, though the enemies of it were many and mighty, and the friends and furtherers of it few and feeble. Note, In the explication of visions and parables, we must look at the principal scope of them, and be satisfied with that, if that be clear, though we may not be able to account for every circumstance, or accommodate it to our purpose. The angel lets the prophet know in general that this vision was designed to illustrate a *word*, which the Lord had to say to Zerubbabel to encourage him to go on with the building of the temple. Let him know that he is a worker together with God in it, and it is a work which God will own and crown.

1. God will carry on and compleat this work, as he had begun their deliverance from Babylon not by external force, but by secret operations and internal influences upon the minds of men. He saith this, who is *the Lord of hosts*, and could do it *vi & armis*, has legions at command, but he *will* do it, *not by human might or power, but by his own Spirit.* What is done by *his Spirit* is done by *might and power*, but it stands in opposition to visible force. Israel was brought out of Egypt, and into Canaan by *might and power*, in both these works of wonder great slaughter was made; but they were brought out of Babylon and into Canaan the second time by *the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, working upon the spirit of Cyrus, and inclining him to proclaim liberty to them, and working upon the spirits of the captives, and inclining them to accept the liberty offered them. It was by *the Spirit of the Lord of hosts* that the people were excited and animated to build the temple, and therefore they are said to be *helped by the prophets of God*, because they as the Spirit's mouth *spoke* to their hearts, *Ezra v. 2.* It was by the same Spirit that the heart of Darius was inclined to favour and further that good work, and that the sworn enemies of it were infatuated in their councils, so that they could not hinder it as they designed. Note, The work of God is often carried on very successfully, when yet it is carried on very silently, and without the assistance of human force; the gospel temple is built not by might or power, for *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal*, but by *the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, whose work on mens consciences is mighty to the pulling down of strong holds; thus the excellency of the power is of God and not of man. When instruments fail, let us therefore leave it to God to do his work himself, by his own Spirit.

2. All the difficulties and oppositions that lie in the way shall be got over and removed, even those that seem insuperable, *ver. 7. Who art thou, O great mountain?* Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. See here, (1.) How the difficulty is represented, it is a *great mountain* unpassable, and immovable. A heap of rubbish like a *great mountain* which must be got away, or the work cannot go on. The enemies of the Jews are proud and hard as great moun-

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tains; but when God has work to do, the mountains that stand in the way of it shall dwindle into mole-hills; for see here, (2.) How these difficulties are despised, *who art thou, O great mountain*, that thou shouldst stand in God's way, and think to stop the progress of his work? who art thou that lookest so big that thus threatenest, and art thus feared? Before Zerubbabel when he is God's agent *thou shalt become a plain.* All the difficulties shall vanish, and all the objections be got over; *every mountain and hill shall be brought low*, when the way of the Lord is to be prepared, *Isa. xl. 4.* Faith will remove mountains, and make them plains. Christ is our Zerubbabel; mountains of difficulty were in the way of his undertaking, but before him they were all levelled; nothing is too hard for his grace to do.

3. The same hand that has begun this good work will perform it. *He shall bring forth the head-stone*, *ver. 7.* and again, *ver. 9. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house*, be it spoken to his honour, perhaps with his own hands he laid the first stone, and though it have been long retarded, and is still much opposed, yet it shall be finished at last, he shall live to see it finished, nay, and *his hands shall also finish it*; herein a type of Christ, who is both the *author* and the *finisher of our faith*; and his being the *author* of it is an assurance to us that he will be the *finisher*, for *as for God his work is perfect*; has he begun, and shall he not make an end? Zerubbabel shall himself *bring forth the head-stone with shoutings*, and loud acclamations of joy, among the spectators. The acclamations are not *huzzas*, but *grace, grace*, that is the burthen of the triumphant songs the church sings. It may be taken, (1.) As magnifying free grace, and giving to that all the glory of what is done; when the work is finished, it must be thankfully acknowledged it was not by any policy or power of our own that it was brought to perfection, but it was grace that did it: God's good-will towards us, and his good work in us and for us. Grace, grace, must be cried not only to the *head-stone*, but to the foundation-stone, the corner-stone, and indeed to every stone in *God's building*; from first to last it is nothing of works, but all of grace, and all our crowns must be cast at the feet of free grace. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us.* (2.) As depending upon free grace, and desiring the continuance of it for what is yet to be done. *Grace, grace*, is the language of prayer as well as of praise; now this building is finished all happiness attend it! peace be within its walls, and, in order to that, *grace*. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon it! Note, What comes from the grace of God, may in faith and upon good grounds be committed to the grace of God, for God will not forsake the work of his own hands.

4. This shall be a full ratification of the prophecies which went before, concerning the Jews return and their settlement again. When the temple is finished, then *thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.* Note, The exact accomplishment of scripture prophecies is a convincing proof of their divine original. Thus God *confirmeth the word of his servants*, by *saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built*, *Isa. xlv. 26.* No word of God shall fall to the ground, nor shall there fail one iota or tittle of it; Zechariah's prophecies of the approaching day of deliverance to the church, would soon appear by the accomplishment of them to be of God.

5. This shall effectually silence those that looked with contempt upon the beginnings of this work, *ver. 10. Who? Where is he now that despised the day of small things*, and thought this work would never come to any thing? The Jews themselves despised the foundations of the second temple, because it was likely to be so far inferior to the first, *Ezra iii. 17.* Their enemies despised the wall when it was in the building, *Neh. ii. 19.*—iv. 2, 3. But let them not do it. Note, In God's work the day of small things is not to be despised. Though the instruments be weak and unlikely, God often chuseth such, by them to bring about great things. As a *great mountain* becomes a *plain* before him, when he pleaseth, so a little stone cut out of a mountain without hands comes to fill the earth, *Dan. ii. 35.* Though the beginnings be *small*, God can make the latter end greatly to *increase*; a grain of mustard-seed may become a great tree. Let not the dawning light be despised, for it will shine more and more to the perfect day. The day of small things is the day of *precious things*, and will be the day of *great things*.

6. This shall abundantly satisfy all the hearty well-wishers to God's interest, who will be glad to see themselves mistaken in *despising the day of small things*. They that despaired of the finishing of the work, shall rejoice when they *see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel*, when they see him busy among the builders, giving orders and directions what to do, and taking care that the work be done with great exactness, that it may be both *fine* and *firm*. Note, It is matter of great rejoicing to all good people, to see magistrates careful and active for the edifying of the house of God, to see the *plummet* in the hand of those who have power to do much, if they have but a heart according to it, we see not Zerubbabel with the trowel in his hand, that is left to the workmen, the ministers, but we see him with the *plummet in his hand*, and it is no disparagement but an honour to him: Magistrates are to inspect ministers work, and to *speak comfortably to the Levites*, that do their duty.

7. This shall highly magnify the wisdom and care of God's providence, which is always employed for the good of his church. Zerubbabel doth his part, doth as much as man can do to forward the work, but it is *with those seven, those seven eyes of the Lord*, which we read of, *chap. iii. 9.* He could do nothing if the watchful, powerful, gracious providence of God did not go before him, and go along with him in it. Except the Lord had built this house, Zerubbabel and the rest had laboured in vain, *Psal. cxxvii. 1.* These eyes of the Lord are they that run to and fro through the whole earth, that take cognizance of all the creatures and all their actions, *2 Chron. xvi. 9.* and inspire and direct all, according to the divine counsels. Note, We must not think that God is so taken up with the affairs of his church as to neglect the world; but it is a comfort to us that the same all-wise, almighty providence that governs the nations of the earth, is in a particular manner conversant about the church. Those seven eyes that run through the earth, are all upon the stone that Zerubbabel is laying straight with his plummet, to see that it be well laid. And those that have the plummet in their hand must look up to those eyes of the Lord, must have a constant regard to the divine providence, and act in dependence upon its conduct and submission to its disposals.

11. ¶ Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive-trees, upon the right side of the candlestick, and upon the left side thereof? 12. And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive-branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? 13. And he answered me, and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. 14. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth.

Enough is said to Zechariah to encourage him, and to enable him to encourage others, with reference to the good work of building the temple which they were now about, and that was the principal intention of the vision he saw, but still he is inquisitive about the particulars, which we will ascribe not to any vain curiosity, but to the value he had for divine discoveries, and the pleasure he took in acquainting himself with them. Those that know much of the things of God cannot but have a humble desire to know more. Now observe,

1. What his enquiry was. He understood the meaning of the candlestick and its lamps. It is Jerusalem, it is the temple, and their salvation that is to go forth as a lamp that burneth, but he wants to know what are these two olive-trees, ver. 11. these two olive-branches, ver. 12. Observe here, (1.) He asked. Note, Those that would be acquainted with the things of God, must be inquisitive concerning those things. Ask and you shall be told. (2.) He asked twice, his first question having no reply given to it. Note, If satisfactory answers be not given to our inquiries and requests quickly, we must renew them and repeat them, and continue instant and importunate in them, and the vision shall at length speak and not lie. (3.) His second query varied somewhat from the former. He first asked what are these two olive-trees, but afterwards, what are these two olive-branches? those boughs of the tree that hung over the bowl, and distilled oil into it. When we inquire concerning the grace of God, it must be rather as it is communicated to us by the fruitful boughs of the word and ordinances, for that is one of the things revealed which belong to us and to our children, than as it is resident in the good olive where all our springs are, for that is one of the secret things which belong not to us. (4.) In his inquiry, he mentions the observations he had made upon the vision, he took notice not only of what was obvious at first sight, that the two olive-trees grew, one on the right side, and the other on the left side of the candlestick, so nigh, so ready is divine grace to the church, but he observed further, upon a more narrow inspection, that the two olive-branches, from which in particular the candlestick did receive of the root and fatness of the olive, as the apostle saith of the church, *Rom. xi. 17.* did empty the golden oil, i. e. the clear bright oil, the best in its kind, and of great value, as if it were *aurum potabile*, liquid gold, out of themselves through the two golden pipes. Or as the margin reads it, which by the hand of the two golden pipes empty out of themselves oil into the gold, i. e. into the golden bowl on the head of the candlestick. Our Lord Jesus emptied himself to fill us; his precious blood is the golden oil in which we are supplied with all we need.

2. What answer was given to his enquiry. Now again the angel obliged him expressly to own his ignorance before he informed him, ver. 13. Knowest thou not what these be? If thou knowest the church to be the candlestick, canst thou think the olive-trees that supply it with oil to be any other than the grace of God? But he owned he either did not fully understand it, or was afraid he did not rightly understand it, I said, No, my Lord, how should I, except some one guide me? And then he told him, ver. 14. These are the two sons of oil, so it is in the original, the two anointed ones; so we read it; rather the two oily ones: That which we

read, *Isa. v. 1.* a very fruitful hill is in the original, the horn of the son of oil, a fat and fattening soil. (1.) If by the candlestick we understand the visible church, particularly that of the Jews at that time, for whose comfort it was primarily intended, these sons of oil that stand before the Lord of the whole earth, are the two great ordinances and offices of the magistracy and ministry, at that time lodged in the hands of those two great and good men, Zerubbabel and Joshua, kings and priests were anointed; this prince, this priest, were oily ones, endued with the gifts and graces of God's Spirit, to qualify them for the work to which they were called. They stood before the Lord of the whole earth to minister to him, and to receive direction from him; and a great influence they had upon the affairs of the church at that time; their wisdom, courage, and zeal, were continually emptying themselves into the golden bowl, to keep the lamps burning; and when they are gone, others shall be raised up to carry on the same work; Israel shall no longer be without prince and priest. Good magistrates and good ministers that are themselves anointed with the grace of God, and stand by the Lord of the whole earth, as faithful adherents to his cause, contribute very much to the maintaining and advancing of religion, and the shining forth of the word of life. (2.) If by the candlestick we understand the church of the first-born, of true believers, these sons of oil may be meant of Christ, and the Spirit, the Redeemer, and the Comforter. Christ is not only the Messiah, the anointed one himself, but he is the good olive to his church; and from his fulness we receive, *John i. 16.* And the holy Spirit is the unction or anointing which we have received, *1 John ii. 20, 27.* From Christ the olive-tree, by the Spirit the olive-branch, all the golden-oil of grace is communicated to believers, which keeps their lamps burnings, and without a constant supply of which they would soon go out. They stand by the Lord of the whole earth, who is in a special manner the church's Lord, for the Son was to be sent by the Father, and so was the Holy Ghost, in the time appointed, and they stand by him ready to go.

C H A P. V.

Hitherto we have seen visions of peace only, and all the words we have heard have been good words and comfortable words. But the pillar of cloud and fire hath a black and dark side towards the Egyptians, as well as a bright and pleasant side towards Israel; so have Zechariah's visions; for God's prophets are not only his ambassadors to treat of peace with the sons of peace, but heralds to proclaim war against those that delight in war, and persist in their rebellion. Two visions here are in this chapter, by which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. God will do great things for his, and very kind ones which the faithful sons of Zion shall rejoice in, but let the sinners of Zion be afraid; for (1.) God will reckon severely with those particular persons, among them that were wicked and profane, and hated to be reformed in these times of reformation; while God is shewing kindness to the body of the nation, and loading that with his blessings, they and their families shall notwithstanding that lie under the curse, which the prophet sees in a flying roll, ver. 1—4. (2.) If the body of the nation hereafter degenerate, and wickedness prevails among them, it shall be carried off and hurried away with a swift destruction, under the pressing weight of divine wrath, represented by a talent of lead upon the mouth of an ephah, carried upon the wing I know not where, ver. 5—11.

1. THEN I turned, and lift up mine eyes and looked, and behold, a flying roll. 2. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll, the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. 3. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth, shall be cut off as on this side, according to it: and every one that sweareth, shall be cut off as on that side, according to it. 4. I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof.

We do not find that the prophet now needed to be wakened, as he did, *chap. iv. 1.* being wakened then he kept wakeful after; nay, now he needs not be so much as called to look about him, for of his own accord he turns and lifts up his eyes. This good

men sometimes get by their infirmities; they make them the more careful and circumspect afterwards. Now observe,

1. What it was that the prophet saw; he looked up into the air, and *behold, a flying roll*; a vast large scroll of parchment, which had been rolled up, and is therefore called a *roll*, but was now unrolled, and expanded; this roll was flying upon the wings of the wind, carried swiftly thro' the air in open view, as an eagle that shoots down upon her prey; it is a *roll* like Ezekiel's that was *written within and without, with lamentations and mourning and wo*, Ezek. ii. 9, 10. As the *command of the law* is in writing, for certainty and perpetuity, so is the *curse of the law*, it *writes bitter things* against the sinner: what I have written, I have written, and what is written remains. The angel to engage the prophet's attention, and to raise in him a desire to have it explained, asks him *what he sees*? And he gives him this account of it, *I see a flying roll*, and as near as he can guess by his eye, it is *twenty cubits long*, that is ten yards, and *ten cubits broad*, that is five yards. The scriptures of the Old Testament and the New are *rolls*, in which God hath *written to us* the great things of his *law and gospel*; Christ is the master of these rolls; they are large rolls, have much in them; they are *flying rolls*, the angel that had the *everlasting gospel to preach* flew in the midst of heaven, Rev. xiv. 6. God's word *runneth very swiftly*, Psal. cxlvii. 15. Those that would be let into the meaning of these rolls must first tell *what they see*, must go as far as they can themselves; *what is written in the law, how readest thou*? Tell me that, and then thou shalt be made to *understand what thou readest*.

2. How it was expounded to him. *ver. 3, 4.* This *flying roll* is a *curse*, it contains a declaration of the righteous wrath of God, against those sinners especially who by *swearing* affront God's majesty, or by *stealing* invade their neighbours property. Let every Israelite rejoice in the blessings of his country *with trembling*, for if he *swear*, if he *steal*, if he live in any course of sin, he shall see them with his eyes, but shall not have the comfort of them, for against him the curse is gone forth: *If I be wicked, wo to me* for all this. Now observe here,

1. The extent of this curse; the prophet sees it *flying*, but which way doth it steer its course? It *goes forth over the face of the whole earth*; not only of the land of Israel, but the *whole world*; for those that have sinned against the *law written in their hearts*, only shall by that law be judged, tho' they have not the book of the law. Note, All mankind is liable to the judgment of God; and wherever sinners are, any where upon the face of the whole earth, the curse of God can and will find them out and seize them. O that we could with an eye of faith see the flying roll of God's curse hanging over the guilty world, as a thick cloud not only keeping off the sun-beams of God's favour from them, but big with thunders, lightnings, and storms ready to destroy them! how welcome then would the tidings of a Saviour be, who came to *redeem us from the curse of the law*, by being himself *made a curse for us*, and like the prophet *eating this roll*! The vast length and breadth of this roll intimates what a multitude of curses sinners lie exposed to; God will make their plagues wonderful, *if they turn not*.

2. The criminals against whom particularly this curse is levelled. The world is full of sin, in great variety, so was the Jewish church at this time, but two sorts of sinners are here specified as the objects of this curse. (1.) *Thieves*; it is *for every one that stealeth*, that by fraud or force takes that which is not his own, especially that *robs God*, and converts to his own use what was devoted to God and his honour, which was a sin much complained of among the Jews at this time, *Mal. iii. 8. Neh. xiii. 10.* Sacrilege is without doubt the worst kind of thievery. He also that *robs his father or mother, and saith it is no transgression*, Prov. xxviii. 24. let him know that against him this curse is directed, for it is against *every one that stealeth*. The letter of the eighth commandment hath no penalty annexed to it, but the curse here is a sanction to that command. (2.) *Swearers*. The former against the second table, this against the first, for the curse meets these that break either table. He that swears *rashly and profanely* shall not be *held guiltless*, much less he that *swears falsely*, *ver. 4.* he imprecates the curse upon himself by his perjury, and so shall his doom be; God will say *amen* to his imprecation, and turn it upon his own head. He has appealed to God's judgment, which is always according to truth, for the confirming of a lye, and to that judgment he shall go which he hath so impiously affronted.

3. The enforcing of this curse, and the equity of it. *I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, ver. 4.* He that pronounceth the sentence will take care to see it executed. His *bringing it forth* notes, (1.) His giving it commission: it is a righteous curse, for he is a righteous God that warrants it. (2.) His giving it the setting on; he *brings it forth* with power, and orders what execution it shall do: and who can put by or resist the curse which a God of almighty power *brings forth*?

4. The effect of this curse: it is very dreadful, (1.) Upon the sinner himself; *every one that steals shall be cut off*, not corrected, but destroyed, cut off from the land of the living: The curse of God is a cutting thing, a killing thing. He shall be cut off *as on this side*, cut off from this place, *i. e.* from Jerusalem, and

so he that steals, from *this side*, (it is the same word) from this place, God will not spare the sinners he finds among his own people; nor shall the holy city be a protection to the unholy; or, they shall be cut off *from hence*, *i. e.* from the face of the whole earth over which the curse flies. Or, he that steals shall be *cut off on this side*, and he that swears *on that side*, *i. e.* they shall all be cut off one as well as another, and both according to the curse; for the judgments of God's hand are exactly agreeable with the judgments of his mouth. (2.) Upon his family. *It shall enter into the house of the thief, and him that swears.* God's curse comes with a warrant to break open doors, and cannot be kept out by bars or locks. There where the sinner is most secure, and thinks himself out of danger, there where he promiseth himself refreshment by food and sleep, there in his own house shall the curse of God seize him; nay, it shall fall not upon him only but upon all about him for his sake. *Cursed shall be his basket and his store, and cursed the fruit of his body*, Deut. xxviii. 17, 18. *The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked*, Prov. iii. 33. It shall not only beset his house, or lie at the door, but *it shall remain in the midst of his house*, and diffuse its malignant influences to all the parts of it; *it shall dwell in his tabernacle because it is none of his*, Job xviii. 15. It shall dwell where he dwells, and be his constant companion at bed and board to make both miserable to him. Having got possession, it shall keep it, and unless he repent and reform there is no way to throw it out, or cut off the entail of it. Nay, it shall so remain in it as to *consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof*, which though never so strong, though the timber be heart of oak, and the stones hewn out of the rocks of adamant, yet they shall not be able to stand before the curse of God. We heard the stone and the timber complaining of the owner's extortion and oppression, and groaning under the burthen of it, *Hab. ii. 11.* Now here we have them delivered *from that bondage of corruption*. While they were in their strength and beauty, they supported fore against their will the sinners pride and security; but when they are consumed, their ruins will, to their satisfaction, be standing monuments of God's justice, and lasting witnesses of the sinners injustice. Note, Sin is the ruin of houses and families; especially the sins of injury and perjury. *Who knows the power of God's anger*, and the operations of his curse? Even timber and stones have been consumed by them; let us therefore stand in awe, and not sin.

5. ¶ Then the angel that talked with me, went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. 6. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. 7. And behold, there was lift up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. 8. And he said, This is wickedness; and he cast it into the midst of the ephah, and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. 9. Then lift I up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings, (for they had wings like the wings of a stork) and they lift up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. 10. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? 11. And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar; and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

The foregoing vision was very plain and easy, but in this are things *dark and hard to be understood*; and some think that the scope of it is to foretel the final destruction of the Jewish church and nation, and the dispersion of the Jews, when by crucifying Christ and persecuting his gospel, they should have filled up the measure of their iniquities, therefore it is industriously set out in obscure figures and expressions, "left the plain denunciation of the second overthrow of temple and state, might discourage them too much from going forward in the present restoration of both." So Mr Pemble.

The prophet was contemplating the power and terror of the curse which consumes the houses of thieves and swearers, when he is bid to turn, and he shall see greater desolations than these made by the curse of God, for the sin of man. *Lift up thine eyes now* and see what is here, *ver. 5.* *What is this that goeth forth*! Whether over the face of the whole earth, as the flying roll, *ver. 3.* or only over Jerusalem, is not certain. But it seems, the prophet now, either thro' the distance, or the dimness of his sight, could not well tell what it was, but asked, *What is it*? *ver. 6.* and the angel tells him both what it is, and what it means.

1. He sees an *ephah*; a measure wherewith they measured corn; it contained *ten omers*, Exod. xvi. 36. and was the tenth part of a *homer*, Ezek. xlv. 11. it is put for any measure used in commerce, *Deut. xxv. 14.* And *this is their resemblance, i. e.* the

the resemblance of the Jewish nation, *over all the earth*, wherever they are now dispersed, or at least, it will be so when their ruin draws near. They are filling up the measure of their iniquity which God hath set them; and when it is full, as the *ephah* of corn, they shall be delivered into the hands of those to whom God had sold them for their sins: they are *meted* to destruction, as an *ephah* of corn measured to the market, or to the mill. And some think the mentioning of an *ephah* which is used in buying and selling, intimates that fraud, and deceit, and extortion in commerce, was a sin abounding much among them, as that people are known to be notoriously guilty of it at this day. This is a proper representation of them *through all the earth*: There is a *measure* set them, and they are filling it up apace. See *Mat. xxiii. 32. 1 Thes. ii. 6.*

2. He sees a woman sitting in the midst of the *ephah*; representing the sinful church and nation of the Jews in their latter and degenerate age; when the faithful city became a harlot. He that weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, measures nations and churches as in an *ephah*, so exact is he in his judicial dealings with them. God's people are called, *The corn of his floor*, *Isa. xxi. 10.* And here he puts this corn into the bushel, in order to his parting with it. The angel saith of the woman in the *ephah*, *This is wickedness*, it is a wicked nation, else God would not have rejected it thus; it is as wicked as *wickedness* itself, it is abominably wicked. *How is the gold become dim! Israel was holiness to the Lord*, *Jer. ii. 3.* But now *this is wickedness*: and wickedness is no where so scandalous, so odious, and many times so outrageous, as when it is found among professors of religion.

3. He sees the woman thrust down into the *ephah*, and a talent, or large weight of lead, cast upon the mouth of it, by which she is secured, and made a close prisoner in the *ephah*, and utterly disabled to get out of it. This is designed to shew that the wrath of God against impenitent sinners is (1.) *Unavoidable*, and what they cannot escape, they are bound over to it, concluded under sin, and shut up under the curse as this woman in the *ephah*; *he would fain flee out of his hand*, *Job xxvii. 22.* but he cannot. (2.) It is insupportable, and what they cannot bear up under: Guilt is upon the sinner as a talent of lead to sink him to the lowest hell. When Christ said of the things of Jerusalem's peace, *now they are hid from thine eyes*, that threw a talent of lead upon them.

4. He sees the *ephah* with the woman thus pressed to death in it, carried away into some far country. (1.) The instruments employed to do it were *two women* that had wings like those of a stork, large and strong, and to make them fly the more swiftly. they had the wind in their wings, noting the great violence and expedition with which the Romans destroyed the Jewish nation. God has not only winged messengers in heaven, but he can when he pleaseth give wings to those also whom he employs in this lower world; and when he doth so, he forwards them with the wind in their wings; his providence carries them on with a favourable gale. (2.) They bore it up in the air; noting the terrors which pursued the wicked Jews, and their being a publick example of God's vengeance to the world. They lift it up between the earth and the heaven, as unworthy of either, and abandoned by both; for the Jews, when this was fulfilled, *pleased not God*, and were contrary to all men, *1 Thes. ii. 15.* *This is wickedness*, and this comes of it; heaven thrust out wicked angels, and earth spued out wicked Canaanites. (3.) When the prophet enquired whither they carried their prisoner, whom they had now in execution, *ver. 10.* he was told, they designed to build it a house in the land of Shinar. Which intimates, that the punishment of the Jews should be a final dispersion; they should be hurried out of their own country, as the chaff which the wind driveth away, and should be forced to dwell in far countries, particularly in the country of Babylon, whither many of the scattered Jews went, after the destruction of their country by the Romans, as they did also to other countries, especially in the Levant parts; not to sojourn as in their former captivity for seventy years, but to be nailed down for perpetuity: There the *ephah* shall be established, and set upon her own base. Which intimates, (1.) That their calamity shall continue from generation to generation, and they shall be so dispersed, that they shall never unite or incorporate again; they shall settle in a perpetual unsettlement, and Cain's doom shall be theirs, to dwell in the land of shaming. (2.) That their iniquity shall continue too, and their hearts shall be hardened in it; *blindness* is happened unto Israel, and they are settled upon the lees of their own unbelief: their wickedness is established upon its own basis. God has given them a spirit of slumber, *Rom. xi. 8.* left at any time they should convert and be healed.



C H A P. VI.

The two kingdoms of providence and grace, are what we are all very nearly interested in, and therefore are concerned to acquaint ourselves with, all our temporal affairs being in a necessary subjection to the divine providence, and all our spiritual and eternal concerns in a necessary dependence upon the divine grace; and these two are represented to us in this chapter, the former by a vision, the latter by a type. Here is, (1.) God, as king of nations, ruling the world by the ministry of angels, in the vision of the four chariots, *ver. 1—8.* (2.) God, as king of saints, ruling the church by the mediation of Christ, in the figure of Joshua the high-priest crowned, the ceremony performed, and then explained concerning Christ, *ver. 9—15.*

1. **A**ND I turned, and lift up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of brass. 2. In the first chariot were red horses, and in the second chariot black horses, 3. And in the third chariot white horses, and in the fourth chariot griffed and bay horses. 4. Then I answered, and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? 5. And the angel answered, and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the LORD of all the earth. 6. The black horses which are therein, go forth into the north-country, and the white go forth after them; and the griffed go forth toward the south-country. 7. And the bay went forth, and fought to go, that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get ye hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. 8. Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north-country have quieted my spirit in the north-country.

The prophet is forward to receive this vision, and, as if he expected it, he turned and lift up his eyes and looked. Tho' this was the seventh vision he had had, yet he doth not think he has had enough, for the more we know God and his will, if we know it aright, the more desirous we shall be to get a further acquaintance with God. Now observe here,

1. The sight that the prophet had of four chariots drawn by horses of divers colours; together with the explication of the sight, *ver. 1—5.* He did not look long but he discovered that which was worth seeing, and which would serve very much for the encouraging of himself and his friends, in this dark day. We are very much in the dark concerning the meaning of this vision. Some by the four chariots understand the four monarchies; and then they read, *ver. 5.* These are the four winds of the heavens, and suppose that therein reference is had to *Dan. vii. 2.* where Daniel saw in vision the four winds of the heavens, striving upon the great sea, representing the four monarchies. The Babylonian monarchy they think is here represented by the red horses, which are not afterwards mentioned, because that monarchy was now extinct. The second chariot with the black horses, is the Persian monarchy, which went forth northward against the Babylonians, and quieted God's Spirit in the north-country, by executing his judgments on Babylon, and freeing the Jews from their captivity. The white, the Grecians, go forth after them into the north, for they overthrow the Persians. The griffed, the Romans, who conquered the Grecian empire, are said to go forth toward the south country; because, Egypt, which lay southward, was the last branch of the Grecian empire, that was subdued by the Romans. The bay horses had been with the griffed, but afterwards went forth by themselves; and by these they understand the Goths and Vandals, who with their victorious arms walked to and fro thro' the earth; or the Selducidæ and Lagidæ the two branches of the Grecian empire. Thus Grotius and others.

But I incline rather to understand this vision more generally, as designing to represent the administration of the kingdom of providence, in the government of this lower world. The angels are often called the chariots of God, as *Psal. lxviii. 17.—xviii. 10.* The various providences of God concerning nations and churches, are represented by the different colours of horses, *Rev. vi. 2, 4, 5, 8.* And so we may observe here,

1. That the counsels and decrees of God are the spring and original of all events, and they are immoveable, as mountains of brass.

brass. The *chariots* came from between the *two mountains*, for God *performeth* the thing that is *appointed* for us: his appointments are the great originals, and his performances are but copies from them: he doth all according to the *counsel of his will*. We could as soon grasp the mountains in our arms, as comprehend the divine counsels in our finite understandings; and as soon remove *mountains of brass*, as alter any of God's purposes; for *he is in one mind, and who can turn him?* Whatever the providences of God are concerning us, as to publick or private affairs, we should see them all coming from *between the mountains of brass*; and therefore see it as much our folly to quarrel with them, as it is our duty to acquiesce in them. Who may say to God, *What dost thou, or why dost thou so?* Acts ii. 23.—iv. 28.

2. That God executeth his decrees in the works of providence, which are as *chariots*, in which he rides as a prince in an open chariot, to shew his glory to the world; in which, as in chariots of war, he rides forth *conquering, and to conquer*, and triumphing over all the enemies of his glory and government. God is *great and terrible* in his doings, Psal. lxxiii. 3. and in them we see the *goings of our God, our King*, Psal. lxxviii. 24. His providences move swiftly and strongly as chariots, but all directed and governed by his infinite wisdom and sovereign will, as chariots by their drivers.

3. That the holy angels are the ministers of God's providence, and are employed by him as the *armies of heaven*, for the executing of his counsels among the *inhabitants of the earth*, they are the *chariots*, or, which comes all to one, they are the horses that draw the chariots, great in power, and might; and who, like the *horse* that God himself describeth, Job xxxix. 19, &c. are clothed with thunder; are terrible, but cannot be *terrified*, or *made afraid*: they are *chariots of fire, and horses of fire*, to carry one prophet to heaven, and guard another on earth. They are as observant of, and obsequious to, the will of God, as well managed horses are to their rider or driver. Not that God needs them or their services, but he is pleased to make use of them, that he may put honour upon them, and encourage our trust in his providence.

4. That the events of providence have different aspects, and the face of the times often changeth. The *horses* in the *first chariot* were *red*, signifying war and blood-shed, *blood to the horse bridles*, Rev. xiv. 20. Those in the *second chariot* were *black*, signifying the dismal, melancholy consequences of war, it puts all into mourning, lays all waste, introduceth famines and pestilences, and desolations, and makes whole *lands to languish*. Those in the *third chariot* were *white*, signifying the return of comfort, and peace, and prosperity, after these dark and dismal times; tho' God cause grief to the children of men, yet will he have compassion. Those in the *fourth chariot* were of a mixt colour, *gristed and bay*; some *speckled and spotted*, and *ash-coloured*, signifying events of different complexions interwoven and counterchanged; a day of prosperity, and a day of adversity, *set the one over-against the other*: the cup of providence in the hand of the Lord is *full of mixture*, Psal. lxxv. 8.

5. That all the instruments of providence, and all the events of it, come from God, and from him they receive their commissions and instructions, ver. 5. *These are the four spirits of heaven*, the four winds, so some, which seem to blow as they list, from the various points of the compass; but God has them *in his fists*, and brings them out of *his treasures*. Or rather, these are the *angels* that *go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth*, to attend upon him, and minister to him; to behold his glory in the upper world, which is their blessedness, and to serve his glory in this lower world, which is their business. They *stand before him* as the *Lord of the whole earth*, to receive orders from him, and give up their accounts to him, concerning their services on this earth, for it is all within his jurisdiction. But when he appoints, they *go forth* as messengers of his counsels, and ministers of his justice and mercy. Those secret motions and impulses upon the spirits of men, by which the designs of providence are carried on, some think, are these *four spirits of the heavens*, which *go forth from God*, and fulfil what he appoints, who is the *God of the spirits of all flesh*.

6. That there is an admirable beauty in providence, and one event serves for a balance to another, ver. 6. *The black horses went forth*, carrying with them very dark and melancholy events, such as made every person and every thing look black, but presently *the white went forth after them*, carrying joy to them that mourned, and by a new turn given to affairs, making them to look pleasant again. Such are God's dealings with his church and people: if the *black horses* go forth, the *white ones* presently go after them, for as *affliction abounds, consolation much more abounds*.

7. That the common general aspect of providence is mixed and compounded. The *gristed and bay horses* were both in the *fourth chariot*, ver. 3. and tho' they went forth at first towards the *south country*, yet afterwards they *sought to walk to and fro through the earth*, and were *directed* to do so, ver. 7. If we go to and fro *through the earth*, we shall find the events of providence neither *all black*, nor *all white*, but *ash-coloured* or *grey*, mixed of black and white, for such is the world we live in, that before us is unmixt. Here we are singing at the same time of

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mercy and judgment, and we must *sing unto God* of both, Psal. ci. 1. and labour to accommodate our selves to God's will and design in the mixtures of providence, rejoicing in our comforts as tho' we rejoiced not, because they have their allays; and weeping for our afflictions as tho' we wept not, because there is so much mercy mixed with them.

8. That God is well pleased with all the operations of his own providence, ver. 8. *These have quieted my spirit*, these *black horses* which speak extraordinary judgments, and the *white ones* which speak extraordinary deliverances, both which *went toward the north country* (while the common mixed providences went all the world over). *These have quieted my spirit in the north country*, which had of late been the most remarkable scene of action with reference to the church, i. e. by these uncommon appearances and actings of providence God's wrath is executed upon the enemies of the church, and his favours conferred upon the church, both which had long been deferred, and in both, God had fulfilled his will, accomplished his word, and so *quieted his Spirit*. *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake*; and as he speaks, Isa. i. 24. made himself easy.

9. ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 10. Take of *them* of the captivity, *even* of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; 11. Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set *them* upon the head of Joshua, the son of Josedech the high priest; 12. And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name is the **BRANCH**, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: 13. Even he shall build the temple of the LORD, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. 14. And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD. 15. And they *that are far off* shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And *this* shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.

God did not only at *sundry times*, but in *divers manners* speak in time past by the prophets to his church. In the former part of this chapter he spoke by a vision, which the prophet only saw himself; here, in this latter part, he speaks by a *sign*, or *type*, which many saw, and which, as it was explained, was an illustrious prediction of the Messiah, as the priest and king of his church. Here is,

1. The *significant ceremony* which God appointed, and that was the *coronation of Joshua* the high-priest, ver. 10, 11. It is observable, that there should be two eminent types of Christ in the Old Testament, that were both named Joshua, the same name with *Jesus*; and by the LXX, and in the New Testament, rendered *Jesus*, Acts vii. 45. Joshua the chief captain, a type of Christ, the captain of our salvation, and Joshua the chief priest, a type of Christ, the high-priest of our profession; and both, in their day, saviours, and leaders into Canaan. And this is peculiar to Joshua the high-priest, that here was something done to him by the divine appointment, on purpose that he might be a type of Christ; a priest, after the order of Melchizedek, who was both a king and a priest. Joshua was far from being ambitious of a crown, and the people of having a crowned head over them; but the prophet, to the great surprize of both, is ordered to crown Joshua, as if he had been a king. And as Zerubbabel's prudence and piety kept this from being any affront to him, as the setting up of a rival with him; so God's providence kept the kings of Persia from taking umbrage at it, as raising a rebellion against them. In doing what we are sure is God's pleasure, as this was, we may well venture mens displeasure.

1. Here were some Jews come from Babylon, that brought an offering to the house of God; *some of the captivity*, here named to their honour, that *came from Babylon*, on a visit to Jerusalem: they ought to have bid a final farewell to Babylon, and to have come and settled with their brethren, in their own land; and for their remissness, and indifferency in not doing so, they thought to atone by this visit. Perhaps they came as ambassadors from the body of the Jews that were in Babylon; who lived there in ease and fulness; and hearing that the building of the temple went on slowly, for want of money, they sent them with an offering of gold and silver, for the service of the house

of God. Note, Those that by reason of distance, or otherwise, cannot forward a good work by their *persons*, must, as they are able, forward it by their *purses*, if some *find hands*, let others *fill them*.

2. Time and place are appointed for the prophet to meet them. They thought to bring their present to the *priest*, God's ordinary minister; but God has a *prophet*, an extraordinary one, ready to receive *them* and *it*; which would be an encouragement to them, who in their captivity had so often complained, *We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet*, and would invite them, and others, to re-settle in their own land, which then began to look like itself, like a holy land, when the Spirit of prophecy was revived in it. Zechariah was ordered to give them the meeting the same day they came, (for when they were arrived, they would lose no time, but present their offering presently) and to bid them welcome, assuring them that God now accepteth their gifts. He was to meet them in the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, who probably was receiver-general for the temple, and kept the treasures of it. They brought their gold and silver to be employed about the temple; but God ordered it to be used in honour of one greater than the temple, Mat. xii. 6.

3. Crowns are to be made, and put upon the head of Joshua, ver. 11. It is supposed that there were two crowns provided, one of silver, and the other of gold: the former (as some think) noting his priestly dignity, the latter his kingly dignity. Or rather, he being a priest already, and having a crown of gold, of pure gold already, to signify his honour and power as a priest, these crowns of silver and gold both signify the royal dignity; the crown of silver being, perhaps, designed to typify the kingdom of the Messiah, when he was here on earth, for then he was the King of Israel, John i. 49. but the crown of gold, his kingdom in his exalted state; the glory of which, as far exceeded that of the former, as gold doth silver. The sun shines as gold, when he goes forth in his strength; and the beams of the moon, when she walketh in brightness, we call silver beams. Those that had worshipped the sun and moon, shall now fall down before the golden and silver crowns of the exalted Redeemer, before whom the sun shall be ashamed, and the moon confounded, being both out-shone.

2. The signification which God gave of this ceremony. Every one would be ready to ask what is the meaning of Joshua's being crowned thus; and the prophet is as ready to tell them the meaning of it. Upon this speaking sign is grafted a prediction, and the sign was used to make it the more taken notice of, and the better remembered. Now the promise is,

1. That God will, in the fulness of time, raise up a great high-priest, like Joshua. Tell Joshua that he is but the figure of one that is to come, a faint shadow of him, ver. 12. *Speak unto him in the name of the Lord of hosts, that the man whose name is the BRANCH, shall grow up out of his place, out of Bethlehem the city of David, the place appointed for his birth, tho' the family be a root in a dry ground, yet this branch shall spring out of it; as in spring, when the sun returns, the flowers spring out of their roots, that lay buried out of sight, and out of mind. He shall grow up from himself, so some read it, propria virtute, shall be exalted in his own strength.*

2. That as Joshua was an active, useful instrument in building the temple, so the man, the Branch, shall be the master-builder, the sole builder of the spiritual temple, the gospel church. He shall build the temple of the Lord; and it is repeated again, ver. 13. *Even he shall build the temple of the Lord: he shall grow up to do good, to be an instrument of God's glory, and a great blessing to mankind.* Note, The gospel church is the temple of the Lord, a spiritual house, 1 Pet. ii. 5. a holy temple, Eph. ii. 21. In the temple God made discoveries of himself to his people, and there he received the service and homage of his people: so in the gospel church, the light of divine revelation shines by the word, and the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered. Now Christ is not only the foundation, but the founder of this temple, by his Spirit and grace.

3. That Christ shall bear the glory. Glory is a burden, but not too heavy for him to bear, who upholdeth all things. The cross was his glory, and he bore that; so was the crown an exceeding weight of glory, and he bears that. The government is upon his shoulders, and in it he bears the glory, Isa. ix. 6. *They shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house, Isa. xxii. 24.* It becomes him, and he is *par negotio*, well able to bear it. The glory of the priesthood, and royalty, had been divided between the house of Aaron and that of David; but now he alone shall bear all the glory of both. That which he shall bear, which he shall undertake, shall be indeed the glory of Israel, and they must wait for that; and in prospect of that must be content in the want of that external glory which they formerly had. He shall bear such a glory, as shall make the glory of this latter house greater than that of the former. He shall lift up the glory, so it may be read: the glory of Israel had been thrown down, and depressed, but he shall raise it out of the dust.

4. That he should have a throne, and be both priest and king upon his throne. A throne notes both dignity and dominion, an exalted honour, with an extensive power. (1.) This priest shall be a king; and his office, as a priest, shall be no diminution to

his dignity, as a king. *He shall sit and rule upon his throne.* Christ, as a priest, ever lives to make intercession for us, but he doth it sitting at his Father's right-hand, as one having authority, Heb. viii. 1. *We have such a high-priest as Israel never had, for he is set on the right-hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,* which puts a prevailing virtue into his mediation: he that appears for us within the veil, is one that sits and rules there. Christ that is ordained to offer sacrifices for us, is authorized to give law to us. He will not save us, unless we be willing he should govern us. God has prepared him a throne in the heavens; and if we would have any benefit by that, we must prepare him a throne in our hearts, and be willing and glad he should sit and rule upon that throne; and to him every thought within us must be brought into obedience. (2.) This king shall be a priest; a priest upon his throne: with the majesty and power of a king, he shall have the tenderness and simplicity of a priest; who being taken from among men, is ordained for men, and can have compassion on the ignorant, Heb. v. 1, 2. In all the acts of his government, as a king, he prosecutes the intentions of his grace, as a priest. Let not those that are his, then look upon his throne, tho' a throne of glory, and a throne of judgment, with terror and amazement; for as there is a rainbow about the throne, so he is a priest upon the throne.

5. That the counsel of peace should be between them both. That is, (1.) Between Jehovah, and the man the Branch; between the Father and the Son; the counsels concerning the peace to be made between God and man, by the mediation of Christ, shall be concerted, i. e. shall appear to have been concerted by infinite wisdom, in the covenant of redemption; and that the Father and the Son understood one another perfectly well in that matter. Or rather, (2.) Between the priest and the throne, between the priestly and kingly office of Jesus Christ. The man the Branch must grow up to carry on a council of peace, peace on earth, and in order to that, peace with heaven. God's thoughts towards us, were thoughts of peace, and, in prosecution of them, he exalted his Son Christ Jesus to be both a prince and a saviour; gave him a throne, but with this proviso, that he should be a priest upon his throne; and by executing the two offices of a priest and king, should bring about that great undertaking of man's reconciliation to God, and happiness in God. Some think it alludes to the former government of the Jews state, wherein the king and priest, several officers, did take counsel one with and of another, for the maintenance of peace and prosperity in church and state, as did Zerubbabel and Joshua now, I may add, and the prophets of God helping them; so shall the peace and welfare of the gospel church, and of all believers, be wrought, tho' not by two several persons, yet by virtue of two several offices meeting in one; Christ purchasing all peace by his priesthood, and maintaining and defending it by his kingdom. (So Mr Pemble) And his prophetic office is serviceable to both in this great design.

6. That there should be a happy coalition between Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church, and they should both meet in Christ, the priest upon his throne, as the center of their unity. ver. 15. *They that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord.* Some understand it of the Jews that were now afar off in Babylon, that staid behind in captivity, to the great discouragement of their brethren that were returned, who wanted their help in building of the temple. Now God promiseth that many of them, and some of other nations too, proselyted to the Jewish religion, should come in, and lend a helping hand to the building of the temple, and many hands would make light work. The kings of Persia contributed to the building of the temple, Ezra vi. 8. and the furnishing of it, Ezra vii. 19, 20. And in after-times Herod the Great, and others that were strangers, helped to beautify and enrich the temple. But it has a further reference to that temple of the Lord, which the man the Branch was to build: the Gentiles, strangers afar off, shall help to build it, for from among them God will raise up ministers, that shall be workers together with Christ about that building; and all the Gentile converts shall be stones added to this building, so that it shall grow up to a holy temple, Eph. ii. 20, 21, 22. When God's temple is to be built, he can fetch in those that are afar off, and employ them in the building of it.

7. That the accomplishment of this would be a mighty confirmation of the truth of God's word. *Ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.* That promise, that those that were afar off should come and assist them in building the temple of the Lord, was as it were the giving of them a sign; by this they might be assured that the other promises should be fulfilled in due time, this should be fulfilled now very speedily; it was so; for those that had been their enemies and accusers, in obedience to the king's edict, became their helpers, and did speedily what they were ordered to do for the furtherance of the work, and by that means the work went on and was finished, see Ezra vi. 13, 24. Now by this surprizing assistance which they had from afar off in building the temple, they might know that Zechariah who told them of it before was sent of God, and therefore his word concerning the man, the Branch, should be fulfilled.

8. That

8. That these promises were strong obligations to obedience; for *this shall come to pass*, you shall have help in building the temple, *if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God*. You shall have the help of foreigners in building the temple, if you will but set about it in good earnest yourselves. The assistance of others, instead of being an excuse for our slothfulness, should be a spur to our industry. You shall have the benefit and comfort of all those promises, if you make conscience of your duty. They must know that they are upon their good behaviour; and though their God is coming towards them in a way of mercy, they cannot expect him to proceed in it, unless they conform to his laws. Note, That which God requires of us to qualify us for his favour, is obedience to his revealed will; and it must be a diligent obedience: We cannot *obey the voice of God* without a great deal of care and pains, nor will our obedience be *accepted* of God unless it be laboured by us.

3. The provision that was made to preserve the remembrance of this. *The crowns* that were used in this solemnity were not given to Joshua, but must be *kept for a memorial in the temple of the Lord*, ver. 14. Either they were laid up in the temple treasury, or (as the Jews tradition is) they were hung up in the windows of the temple in the view of all, *in perpetuam rei memoriam*; for a traditional evidence of the promise of the Messiah, and this typical transaction used for the confirmation of that promise. The *crowns* were delivered to them who found the materials (and some think their names were engraven on the crowns) to be preserved as a publick testimony of their pious liberality, and an encouragement to others in like manner to bring presents to the house of God. Note, Various means were used for the support of the faith of the Old Testament saints, who waited for the consolation of Israel, till the time, the set time, for it came.

C H A P. VII.

We have done with the visions, but not with the revelations of this book; the prophet sees no more such signs as he had seen, but still the word of the Lord came to him. In this chapter we have, (1.) A case of conscience proposed to the prophet by the children of the captivity concerning fasting; whether they should continue their solemn fasts which they had religiously observed during the seventy years of their captivity, ver. 1—3. (2.) The answer to this question; which is given in this and the next chapter: And this answer was given not all at once but by piece-meal, and, it should seem, at several times, for here are four distinct discourses that have all of them reference to this case, each of them prefaced, with the word of the Lord came, in this chapter, ver. 4—8. and chap. viii. 1, 18. And the method of them is very observable: In this chapter, (1.) The prophet sharply reproves them for the mismanagements of their fasts, ver. 4, 7. (2.) He exhorts them to reform their lives, which would be the best way of fasting, and to take heed of those sins which brought those judgments upon them, which they kept these fasts in memory of, ver. 8—14. And then in the next chapter having searched the wound, he binds it up, and heals it with gracious assurances of great mercy God had yet in store for them, by which he would turn their fasts into feasts.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; 2. When they had sent unto the house of God, Sherezer, and Regem-melech, and their men to pray before the LORD, 3. And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? 4. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5. Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? 6. And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? 7. Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited, and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?

This occasional sermon which the prophet preached, and which is recorded in this and the next chapter, was above two years

after the former, in which he gave them an account of his visions, as appears by comparing the date of this, ver. 1. in the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius, with the date of that, chap. i. 1. in the eighth month of the second year of Darius; not that Zechariah was idle all that while, it is expressly said that he and Haggai continued *prophesying* till the temple was finished in the sixth year of Darius, *Ezra* vi. 14. But during that time he did not preach any sermon that was afterwards published, and left upon record as this here; God may be honoured, his work done, and his interests served by word of mouth as well as by writing; and by inculcating and pressing what has been taught, as well as by advancing something new. Now here we have,

1. A case proposed concerning fasting. Some persons were sent to enquire of the priests and prophets whether they should continue to observe their yearly fasts, particularly that in the fifth month, as they had done. Whether the case was put by those that yet remained in Babylon, who being deprived of the benefit of the solemn feasts which God's ordinance appointed them, made up the want by the solemn fasts which God's providences called them to; or by those that were returned but lived in the country, as some rather incline to think, because they are called *the people of the land*, ver. 5. But as to that, the answer given to the messengers of the captive Jews, might be directed not to them only, but to *all the people*. Observe,

1. Who they were that came with this enquiry. Sharezer and Regem-melech; persons of some rank and figure; for they came *with their men*, and did not think it below them, or any disparagement to them, to be sent on this errand, but rather an addition to their honour to be, (1.) *Attendants in God's house*, there to do duty, and receive orders. The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ. (2.) *Agents for God's people* to negotiate their affairs. Men of estates having more leisure than men of business, ought to employ their time in the service of the publick, and by *doing good* they make themselves *truly great*; the *messengers of the churches* were the *glory of Christ*, 2 Cor. viii. 23.

2. What the errand was upon which they came. They were sent perhaps, not with *gold and silver*, as those, chap. vi. 10, 11. or if they were, that is not mentioned, but upon the two great errands which should bring us all to the house of God, (1.) *To intercede with God for his mercy*. They were sent to *pray before the Lord*, and some think (according to the usage then) to *offer sacrifice*, with which they offered up their prayers. The Jews in captivity prayed towards the temple, as appears *Dan* vi. 10. but now it was in a fair way to be rebuilt, they sent their representatives to pray in it, remembering what God had said that his house should be called *a house of prayer for all people*, *Isa* lvi. 7. In prayer we must set ourselves as *before the Lord*, must see his eye upon us, and have our eye up to him. (2.) *To enquire of God concerning his mind*. Note, When we offer up our requests to God, it must be with a readiness to receive instructions from him; for if we turn away our ear from hearing his law, we cannot expect that our prayers should be acceptable to him. We must therefore desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, *that we may enquire there*, *Psal* xxvii. 4. to ask not only, Lord, what wilt thou do for me? but, Lord, *what wilt thou have me to do?*

3. Whom they consulted: They spoke to the priests that were in the house of the Lord, and to the prophets; the former were an oracle for ordinary cases, the latter for extraordinary; they were blessed with both, and would try if either could acquaint them with the mind of God in this case. Note, God having given diversities of gifts to men, and all to profit with, we should make use of all as there is occasion. They were not so wedded to the priests, their stated ministers, as to distrust the prophets who appeared, by the gifts given them, well qualified to serve the church; nor yet were they so much enamoured with the prophets as to despise the priests, but they spoke both to the priests, and to the prophets: and in consulting both gave glory to the God of Israel, and that one Spirit who *worketh all in all*. God might speak to them either by *urim*, or by *prophets*, 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. and therefore they would not neglect either. The priests and the prophets were not jealous one of another, nor had any difference among themselves, let not the people then make differences between them, but thank God they had both. The prophets did indeed reprove what was amiss in the priests, but at the same time told the people, that the *priests lips* should *keep knowledge*, and they must *enquire the law at his mouth*, for *he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts*, *Mal* ii. 7. Note, Those that would know God's mind should consult God's ministers, and in doubtful cases ask advice of those, whose special business it is to *search the scriptures*.

4. What the case was which they desired satisfaction in, ver. 3. *Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself as I have done these so many years*. Observe, 1. What had been their past practice, not only during the seventy years of the captivity, but to this time which was twenty years after the liberty proclaimed them; they kept up solemn, stated fasts for humiliation and prayer, which they religiously observed, according as their opportunities were, in their closets, families, or such assemblies for worship as they

they had. In the case here they mention only one, that of the fifth month, but it appears by *chap. viii. 19.* that they observed four anniversary fasts. One in the fourth month, (*June 17.*) in remembrance of the breaking up of the wall of Jerusalem, *Jer. lii. 6.* Another in the fifth month, (*July 4.*) in remembrance of the burning of the temple, *Jer. lii. 12, 13.* Another in the seventh month, (*September 3.*) in remembrance of the killing of Gedaliah, which completed their dispersion; and another in the tenth month, (*December 10.*) in remembrance of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, *2 Kings xxv. 1.* Now it was very commendable in them to keep those fasts, thus to humble themselves under those humbling providences, by which God called them to weeping and mourning; thus to accommodate themselves to their troubles, and prepare themselves for deliverance. It would likewise be a means of possessing their children betimes with a due sense of the hand of the Lord gone out against them.

5. What was their present doubt. Whether they should continue these fasts or no? The case is put as by a single person, *should I weep?* But it was the case of many, and the satisfaction of one would be a satisfaction to the rest; or, perhaps many had left it off, but the querist will not be determined by the practice of others, if God will have him continue it, he will whatever others do. His fasting is described by his *weeping, separating himself.* A religious fast must be solemnized, not only by abstinence, here called *a separating ourselves* from the ordinary, lawful comforts of life, but by a godly sorrow for sin, here expressed by *weeping.* Should I still keep such *days to afflict the soul as I have done these so many years.* It is said, *ver. 5.* to be seventy years computed from the last captivity, as before, *chap. i. 12.* The inquiry intimates a readiness to continue it, if God so appoint, though it be a mortification to the flesh. (1.) Something is to be said for the continuance of these fasts; fasting and praying is good work at any time, and doth good; we have always both cause enough and need enough to humble ourselves before God. To throw off these fasts would be an evidence of their being too secure, and a cause of their being more so. They were still in distress and under the tokens of God's displeasure, and it is unwise for the patient to break off his course of physick, while he is sensible of such remains of his distemper. But, (2.) There is something to be said for the letting fall of these fasts. God had changed the method of his providences concerning them, and was returned in ways of mercy to them, and ought not they then to change the method of their duties? Now the bridegroom is returned, why should the *children of the bride-chamber* fast? Every thing is beautiful in its season. And as to the fast of the fifth month, which is that they particularly enquire of, that being kept in remembrance of the burning of the temple, might seem to be superseded rather than any of the other, because the temple was now in a fair way to be rebuilt. But having long kept up this fast, they would not leave it off without advice, and without asking and knowing God's mind in the case. Note, A good method of religious services which we have found beneficial to ourselves and others, ought not to be altered without good reason, and therefore not without mature deliberation.

2. An answer given to this case. And it should seem though the question looked plausible enough they that proposed it were not conscientious in it, for they were more concerned about the ceremony than about the substance; they seemed to boast of their fasting, and to upbraid God Almighty with it, that he had not sooner returned in mercy to them, for we have done it *these so many years.* As those, *Isa. lviii. 3. Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?* And some think that an unbelief and distrust of the promises of God was at the bottom of their enquiry, for if they had given them the credit that was due to them, they needed not to doubt but that their fasts ought to be laid aside, now the occasion of them was over.

And therefore the first answer to their enquiry is a very sharp reproof of their hypocrisy, directed not only to the *people of the land*, but to the *priests*, who had set up these fasts, and perhaps some of them were for keeping them up to serve some purpose of their own. Let them all take notice that whereas they thought they had made God very much their debtor by these fasts, they were much mistaken, for they were not acceptable to him, unless they had been observed in a better manner, and to better purpose.

1. *What they did that was good was not done aright,* *ver. 5.* You fasted and mourned, they were not chargeable with the omission or neglect of the duty, though it was displeasing to the body, thy fasts were continually before me, *Psal. l. 8.* but they had not managed them aright. Note, Those that come to enquire of their duty must be willing first to be told of their faults. And those that seem zealous for the outside of a duty ought to examine themselves faithfully whether they have the regard they ought to have to the inside of it.

(1.) They had not an eye to God in their fasting. *Did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?* He appeals to their own consciences, they will witness against them, that they had not been sincere in it, much more will God, who is greater than the heart, and knows all things. You know very well you did not at all fast to me: in fasting did you fast to me? There was the carcase and

form of the duty, but none of the life, and soul, and power of it. Was it to me, even to me? The repetition intimates what a great deal of stress is laid upon this as the main matter, in that and other exercises that they be done to God, even to him, with an eye to his word as our rule, and his glory as our end in them, seeking to please him and to obtain his favour, and studious by the sincerity of our intentions to approve ourselves to him. When this was wanting every fast was but a jest. To fast, and not fast to God, was to mock him, and provoke him, and could not be pleasing to him. Those that make fasting a cloke for sin, as Jezebel's fast, or by it make their court to men for their applause, as the Pharisees, or that rest in outward expressions of humiliation, while their hearts are unhumbled, as Ahab, do they fast to God, even to him? Is this the fast that God hath chosen? *Isa. lviii. 5.* If the solemnities of our fasting, though frequent, long, and severe, do not serve to put an edge upon devout affections, to quicken prayer, to increase godly sorrow, and to alter the temper of our minds, and the course of our lives for the better, they do not at all answer the intention, and God will not accept them as performed to him, even to him.

(2.) They had the same eye to themselves in their fasting, that they had in their eating and drinking, *ver. 6. When ye did eat, and when ye did drink* on other days, nay, perhaps on your fast-days, in the observation of which you could, when you saw cause, dispense with yourselves, and take a liberty to eat and drink, and did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? Have you not always done as you had a mind yourselves? Why then do you now pretend a desire to know the mind of God? In your religious feasts and thanksgivings you had no more an eye to God than in your fasts. Or rather it refers to their common meals; they did no more design the honour of God in their fasting and praying, than they did in their eating and drinking; but self was still the center in which the lines of all their actions natural, civil, and religious, met. They needed not be in such care about the continuance of their fasts, unless they had kept them better. Note, We miss our end in eating and drinking when we eat to ourselves, and drink to ourselves, whereas we should eat and drink to the glory of God, *1 Cor. x. 13.* that our bodies may be fit to serve our souls in his service.

2. The principal good thing they should have done was left undone, *ver. 7. Should ye not hear the words which the Lord has cried by the former prophets?* Yes, that you should have done on your fast-days; it was not enough to weep and separate yourselves on your fast-days, in token of your sorrow for the judgments you were under, but you should have searched the scriptures, of the prophets, that you might have seen what was the ground of God's controversy with your fathers, and might have taken warning by their miseries not to tread in the steps of their iniquities. You ask, shall you do as you have done in fasting? No, you must do that which you have not yet done, you must repent of your sins, and reform your lives, that is it that we now call you to, and it is the same that the former prophets called your fathers to. To affect them the more with the mischief that sin had done them, that they might be brought to repent of it, he puts them in mind of the former flourishing estate of their country; Jerusalem was then inhabited, and in prosperity, that is now desolate and in distress; the cities round about that are now in ruins were then inhabited too and in peace; the country likewise was very populous. Men inhabited the south of the plain, which was not at all fortified, and yet they lived safely, and which was fruitful, and so they lived plentifully; but then God by the prophets cried to them, as one in earnest, and importunate with them, to amend their ways and doings, or else their prosperity would soon be at an end. Now, saith the prophet, you should have taken notice of that and have inferred, that what was required of them for the preventing of the judgments, and which they did not, is required of you for the removal of the judgments, and if you do it not, all your fasting and weeping signifies nothing. Note, The words of the late prophets agree with those of the former; and whether people are in prosperity or adversity they must be called upon to leave their sins, and do their duty; this must still be the burthen of every song.

8. ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, 9. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother. 10. And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor, and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. 11. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. 12. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant-stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts. 13. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would

Would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts. 14. But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not: thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

What was said, *ver. 7.* that they *should have heard the words of the former prophets*, is here enlarged upon for warning to these hypocritical enquirers, who *continued their sins*, when they very precisely asked, whether they should *continue their fasts*. This prophet had before put them in mind of their fathers disobedience, to the calls of the prophets, and what came of it, *chap. i. 4, 5, 6.* and now here again, for others harms should be our warnings. God's judgments upon Israel of old for their sins were *written for admonition* to us Christians, *1 Cor. x. 11.* and the same use we should make of the like providences in our own day.

1. This prophet here repeats the heads of the sermons, which the former prophets preached to their fathers, *ver. 9, 10.* because the very same things were required of them now. Thus doth the *Lord of hosts speak* to you now, and thus he did speak to your fathers, saying, *Execute true judgment.* The duties here required of them, which would have been the lengthening of the tranquillity of their fathers, and must be the restoring of their tranquillity are not keeping fasts and offering sacrifices, but *doing justly, and loving mercy*; duties which they were bound to by the light and law of nature, though there had been no prophets sent to insist upon them; duties which had a direct tendency to the publick welfare and peace, and which they themselves would be the gainers by, and not God. (1.) Magistrates must administer justice impartially, according to the maxims of the law, and the merits of the cause, without respect of persons. *Judge judgment of truth, and execute it when you have judged it.* (2.) Neighbours must have a tender concern for one another, and must not only do one another no wrong, but must be ready to do all the good offices that lay in their power to one another. They must *show mercy and compassions every man to his brother*; as the case called for it. The infirmities of others, as well as their calamities, are to be looked upon with compassion. *Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.* (3.) They must not bear hard upon those that they have advantage against, and that they know are not able to help themselves: They must not either in commerce, or in course of law, oppress *the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, and the poor*, *ver. 10.* The weakest must not therefore be thrust to the wall, because they are weakest. No thanks to men not to deny right to those that are in a capacity to demand it, and recover it, but we must not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake, give those their own who have not power to force it from us. Or, it intimates, that that which is but *exactness* with others is *exaction* upon the widows and the fatherless; nay, that not relieving and helping them as we ought, is in effect *oppressing* them. (4.) They must not only not do wrong to any, but they must not so much as desire it, or think of it; *let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.* Do not project it, do not wish it, nay, do not so much as please yourself with the fancy of it. The law of God lays a restraint upon the heart, and forbids the entertaining, forbids the admitting, of a malicious, spiteful, ill-natured thought, *Deut. xv. 9.* *Beware that there be not a thought in thy Belial heart against thy brother.*

2. He describes the wilfulness and disobedience of their fathers, who persisted in all manner of wickedness and injustice, notwithstanding these exhortations and admonitions frequently given them in God's name, various expressions to this purpose are here heaped up, *ver. 11, 12.* setting forth the stubbornness of that carnal mind which is *enmity* against God, and is *not in subjection to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* They were obstinate and refractory, and persisted in their transgressions of the law purely from a spirit of contradiction to the law. (1.) They would not, if they could help it, come within hearing of the prophets, but kept at a distance; or, if they could not avoid hearing what they said, yet they resolved they would not heed it, *they refused to hearken*, and looked another way as if they had not been spoken to. (2.) If they did hear what was said to them, and, as it seemed, inclined at first to comply with it, yet they flew off when it came to their setting to, and like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke *they pulled away the shoulder*, and would not submit to the *easy yoke and light burthen* of God's commandments. They gave a *withdrawing shoulder*, so the word is, they seemed to lay their shoulder to the work, but they presently withdrew it again, as those *Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11.* They were like a deceitful bow, as that son that said, *I go, Sir, but went not.* (3.) They filled their own minds with prejudices against the word of God; and had some objection or other ready wherewith to fortify themselves against every sermon they heard. *They stopped their ears that they should not hear*, as the deaf adder, *Psal. lviii. 4.* And none so deaf as those that will not hear, that make *their own ear heavy*, as the word is. (4.) They resolved that nothing that was said to them, for the enforcing of these injunctions, should make any impression upon them; *they made their hearts as an*

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adamant-stone, as a *diamond*, the hardest of stones to be wrought upon; or, as a *flint*, which the mason cannot hew into shape, as he can other stone out of the quarry. Nothing so hard, so unmalleable, so inflexible, as the heart of a presumptuous sinner; and they whose hearts are hard may thank themselves, they are of their own hardening; and it is just with God to give them over to a reprobate sense, to the hardness and impenitence of their own hearts. These stubborn sinners hardened their hearts on purpose, *lest they should hear* what God said to them by the written word, *by the law of Moses*, and by the *words of the prophets* that preached to them; they had *Moses and the prophets*, but resolved they would hear neither, nor would they have been *persuaded*, though one had been *sent to them from the dead.* The words of the prophets were not regarded by them, though they were words which the *Lord of hosts* sent, and directed to them, though he sent them immediately by *his Spirit* in the prophets; so that in despising them they affronted God himself, and *resisted the Holy Ghost.* Note, The reason why men are not good is because they will not be so, they will not consider, they will not comply, and therefore *if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.*

3. He shews the fatal consequences of it to their fathers. *Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of hosts*; God was highly displeased with them, and justly; he required nothing of them but what was reasonable in itself, and beneficial to them, and yet they refused, and in a most insolent manner too; what master could bear to be so abused by his own servant? Such an implacable enmity to the gospel, as this here to the law and the prophets, was that which brought *wrath to the uttermost* upon the last generation of the Jewish church, *1 Thes. ii. 16.* Great sins against the *Lord of hosts*, whose authority is incontestable, bring *great wrath from the Lord of hosts*, whose power is irresistible. And the effect was, (1.) As they had turned a deaf ear to God's word, so God turned a deaf ear to their prayers, *ver. 13.* *As he cried* to them in their prosperity to leave their sins, and they would not hear, but persisted in their iniquities; so they *cried to him* in the day of their trouble to remove his judgments, and he would not hear but lengthened out their calamities. They that set God at defiance in the height of their pride, yet when pangs came upon them cried unto him; *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee*; but God hath said it, and will abide by it, *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination*, *Prov. xxviii. 9.—i. 24.* Iniquity regarded in the heart will certainly spoil the success of prayer, *Psal. lxvi. 18.* (2.) As they flew off from their duty and allegiance to God, and were of desultory and unsettled spirits, so God *dissipated* them, and threw them about as chaff before a whirlwind; *he scattered them among all the nations whom they knew not*, and whom therefore they could not expect to receive any kindness from, *ver. 14.* (3.) As they violated all the laws of their land, so God took away all the glories of it; *their land was desolate after them, and no man passed through or returned.* All that country that was the kingdom of the two tribes, after the dispersion of the remaining Jews upon the slaughter of Gedaliah, was left utterly uninhabited, there was not man, woman, or child in it, till the Jews returned at the end of the seventy years captivity; nay, it should seem the very roads that lay through the country were deserted; none passed or repassed; which as it had an intimation of mercy in it, though they were cast out of it, yet it was kept empty for their return; so for the present it made the judgment appear much the more dismal; for what a horrid wilderness must a land be, that had been so many years uninhabited? And they might thank themselves, it was *they* that by their own wickedness laid *the pleasant land desolate.* It was not so much the Chaldeans that did it, no, they did it themselves, the desolations of a land are owing to the wickedness of its inhabitants, *Psal. cvii. 34.* This came of their wilful disobedience to the law of God. And the present generation saw how *desolate* sin had made that *pleasant land*, and yet would not take warning.

CHAP. VIII.

The work of ministers is rightly to divide the word of truth, and to give every one their portion. So the prophet is here instructed to do, in the further answer he gives to the case of conscience proposed about continuing the publick fasts. His answer in the foregoing chapter is by way of reproof to those that were disobedient, and would not obey the truth: But here he is ordered to change his voice, and to speak by way of encouragement to the willing and obedient. Two words here are from the Lord of hosts, and they are both good words, and comfortable words. In the first of these messages, *ver. 1.* God promiseth that *Jerusalem shall be restored, reformed, replenished*, *ver. 2—8.* That the country shall be rich, and the affairs of the nation shall be successful, their reputation retrieved, and their state, in all respects, the reverse of what

what it had been for many years past, ver. 9—15. And then exhorts them to reform what was amiss among them, that they might be ready for these favours designed them, ver. 16, 17. In the latter of these messages, ver. 18. he promiseth that their fasts should be superseded by the return of mercy, ver. 19. And that thereupon they should be replenished, enriched, and strengthened by the accession of foreigners to them, ver. 20—23.

1. **A** GAIN the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. 3. Thus saith the LORD, I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain. 4. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. 5. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. 6. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts. 7. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold I will save my people from the east-country, and from the west-country, 8. And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God in truth and in righteousness.

The prophet in his foregoing discourses had left his hearers under a high charge of guilt, and a deep sense of wrath, had left them in a melancholy view of the desolations of their pleasant land, which was the effect of their fathers disobedience, but because he designed to bring them to repentance, not to drive them to despair, he here sets before them the great things God had in store for them, encouraging them hereby to hope that their case of conscience should shortly determine itself, and God's providence should as loudly call them to joy and gladness, as ever it called them to fasting and mourning.

1. It is here promised that God will appear for Jerusalem, and will espouse and plead her cause. (1.) He will be revenged on Zion's enemies, ver. 2. *I was jealous for Zion*, or of Zion, *i. e.* I have of late been so heartily concerned for her honour and interests, with great jealousy. The great wrath that was against her, chap. vii. 12. now turned against her adversaries. I am now jealous for her with great fury, and can no more bear to have her abused in her afflictions, than I could bear to be abused by her provocations. This he had said before, chap. i. 14, 15. that they might promise themselves as much from the power of his anger when it was turned for them, as they had felt from it when it was against them. The sins of Zion were her worst enemies, and had done her the most mischief, and therefore God in his jealousy for her honour and comfort, will take away her sins, and then whatever other enemies injured her, it was at their peril. (2.) He will be resident in Zion's palaces, ver. 3. *I am returned to Zion*, after I had seemed so long to stand at a distance, and I will again dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, as formerly. This secures to them the tokens of his presence in his ordinances, and the instances of his favour in his providences.

2. That there shall be a wonderful reformation in Jerusalem, and religion in the power of it shall prevail and flourish there. Jerusalem that had dealt treacherously both with God and man, shall become so famous for fidelity, and honesty, that it shall be called and known by the name of a city of truth, and the inhabitants of it children that will not lie. The faithful city had become a harlot, Isa. i. 21. but shall now become a faithful city again; faithful to the God of Israel, and to the worship of him only. This was fulfilled; for the Jews after the captivity, though there was much amiss among them, yet were never guilty of idolatry. Jerusalem shall be called the mountain of the Lord of hosts, owning him and owned by him, and therefore the holy mountain, cleared from idols, and consecrated to God, and not as it had been the mount of corruption, 2 Kings xxiii. 13. Note, The city of God ought to be a city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts a holy mountain. Those that profess religion and relation to God, must study to adorn their profession by all instances of godliness and honesty.

3. That there shall be in Jerusalem a great increase of people, and all the marks and tokens of a profound tranquillity. When it is become a city of truth, and a mountain of holiness, it is then peaceable and prosperous, and every thing in it looks bright and pleasant. (1.) You may look with pleasure upon the generation that is going off the stage, and see them fairly quitting it in the ordinary course of nature, and not driven off it by war, famine,

or pestilence, ver. 4. In the streets of Jerusalem that had been filled with the bodies of the slain, or deserted, and left desolate, shall now dwell old men, and old women, that have not been cut off by untimely deaths, either through their own intemperance, or God's vengeance, but have the even thread of their days spun out to a full length; they shall feel no distemper, but the decay of nature, and go to their grave in a full age, as a stock of corn in his season. They shall have every one his staff in his hand for very age, to support him, as Jacob, that worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff, Heb. xi. 21. Old age needs a support, should not be ashamed to use it, but should furnish itself with divine graces, which will be the strength of the heart, and a better support than a staff in the hand. Note, The hoary head, as it is a crown of glory to those that wear it, so it is to the places where they live. It is a graceful thing to a city, to see abundance of old people in it; it is a sign, not only of the healthfulness of the air, but of the prevalency of virtue, and the suppression and banishment of those many vices which cut off the number of mens months in the midst: A sign, not only that the climate is temperate, but that the people are so. (2.) You may look with as much pleasure upon the generation that is rising up in their room, ver. 5. *The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets.* This intimates, (1.) That they shall be blessed with a multitude of children, their families shall increase and multiply, and replenish the city, which was an early product of the divine blessing, Gen. i. 28. Happy the man, happy the nation, whose quiver is full of these arrows! They shall have of both sexes, boys and girls, in whom their families shall afterwards be joined, and another generation raised up. (2.) That their children shall be healthful, and strong, and active; their boys and girls shall not lie sick in bed, or sit pining in the corner, but (which is a pleasant sight to parents) shall be hearty and chearful, and play in the streets. It is their pleasant playing age, let us not grudge it them, much good may it do them, and no harm; evil days will come time enough, and years of which they will say they have no pleasure in them; in consideration of which, they are concerned not to spend all their time in play, but to remember their Creator. (3.) That they shall have great plenty, and meat enough for all their mouths. In time of famine, we find the children swooning as the wounded in the streets of the city, Lam. ii. 11, 12. If they are playing in the streets, it is a good sign they want for nothing. (4.) That they shall not be terrified with the alarms of war, but enjoy a perfect security: There shall be no breaking in of invaders, no going out of deserters, no complaining in the streets, Psal. cxliv. 14. for when there is playing in the streets, it is a sign there is little care or fear there. Time was when the enemy hunted their steps so close, that they could not go in their streets, Lam. iv. 18. but now they shall play in the streets, and fear no evil. (5.) That they shall have love and peace among themselves. The boys and girls shall not be fighting in the streets, as sometimes in cities, that are divided into factions and parties, the children soon imbibe and express the mutual resentments of the parents; but they shall be innocently and lovingly playing in the streets; not devouring but diverting one another. (6.) That the sports and diversions used, shall be all harmless and inoffensive; the boys and girls shall have no other play, but what they are willing shall be seen in the streets, no play that seeks corners, no playing the fool, or playing the wanton, for it is the mountain of the Lord, the holy mountain, but honest and modest recreations, which they have no reason to be ashamed of. (7.) That childish, youthful sports shall be confined to the age of childhood and youth. It is pleasant to see the boys and girls playing in the streets, but it is ill-favoured to see men and women playing there, that should fill up their time with work and business. It is well enough for children to be sitting in the market-place crossing questions, Matth. xi. 16, 17. but it is no way fit that men, who are able to work in the vineyard, should stand all the day idle there, Matth. xx. 3.

4. That the scattered Israelites shall be brought together again from all parts, whither they were dispersed, ver. 7. *I will save my people from the east-country, and from the west*; will save them from being lost, or losing themselves in Babylon, or in Egypt, or in any other country whither they were driven; they shall neither be detained by the nations among whom they sojourn, nor incorporate with them; but I will save them, will separate them, and will bring them to their own land again, will by the prosperity of that invite them back, and at the same time incline them to return; and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, shall chose to dwell there, because it is the holy city, tho' upon many other accounts it was more eligible to dwell in the country, and therefore we find, Neh. xi. 2. That the people blessed all the men, who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

5. That God would renew his covenant with them, would be faithful to them, and make them so to him; *They shall be my people, and I will be their God.* That is the foundation and crown of all these promises, and is inclusive of all happiness. They shall obey God's laws, and God will secure and advance all their interests. This contract shall be made, shall be new made in truth and in righteousness. Some think the former speaks God's part of the covenant, he will be their God in truth, he will

will make good all his promises of favour to them; and the latter speaks man's part of the covenant, they shall be his people in *righteousness*; they shall be a *righteous* people, and shall abound in the *fruits of righteousness*, and shall not, as they have done, deal treacherously and unjustly with their God. See *Hos. ii. 19, 20*. God will never leave nor forsake them in a way of mercy, as he has promised them; and they shall never leave or forsake him in a way of duty, as they have promised him. These promises were fulfilled in the flourishing state of the Jewish church, for some ages, betwixt the captivity and Christ's time; but were to have a *further and fuller* accomplishment in the gospel church, that *heavenly Jerusalem*, which is from above, is free, and is the *mother of us all*; and *fullest of all* in the future state.

All these precious promises are here ratified, and the doubts of God's people silenced with that question, *ver. 6. If it be marvellous in the eyes of this people, should it be marvellous in mine eyes?* If it seem unlikely to you that ever Jerusalem should be thus repaired, should be thus replenished, is it therefore impossible with God? The *remnant of this people*, (and God's people in this world are but a remnant) being few and feeble, thought all this was too good news to be true, especially *in these days*, these difficult days, these cloudy and dark days, considering how bad the times are, it is highly improbable, it is morally impossible, they should ever come to be so good as the prophet speaks: how can these things be? How can dry bones live? But should it therefore appear so in the eyes of God? Note, We do both God and ourselves a deal of wrong, if we think, that when we are *nonplussed*, he is so; and that he cannot get over the difficulties which to us seem insuperable. *With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible*; so far are God's thoughts and ways above ours.

9. ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. 10. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast, neither was there any peace to him that went out, or came in, because of the affliction: for I set all men, every one against his neighbour. 11. But now I will not be unto the residue of this people, as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts. 12. For the seed shall be prosperous, the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew, and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. 13. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. 14. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not; 15. So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. 16. ¶ These are the things that ye shall do, Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour: execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates. 17. And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour, and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

God, by the prophet, here gives further assurances of the mercy he had in store for Judah and Jerusalem. Here is line upon line for their comfort, as before there was for their conviction. Mighty encouragements these verses contain, with reference to the difficulties they now laboured under. And we may observe,

1. Who they were, to whom these encouragements did belong: to those, who, in obedience to the call of God by his prophets, applied themselves in good earnest to the building of the temple, *ver. 9. Let your hands be strong* that are busy at work for God; *you that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets*, and are not disobedient to them as your fathers were in the former days to the words of those prophets that were sent to them; you may take the comfort of the promises, and shall have the benefit of them who have obeyed the precepts given you *in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid*, when you were told that having begun with it, you must go on; *that the temple might be built*; God told you, you must go on with it, and you have laboured hard at it for some time, in obedience to the heavenly vision; now you are they whose hands must be strengthened, and whose hearts must be comforted with these precious promises; to you is the

word of this consolation sent. Note, Those, and those only, that are employed for God, may expect to be encouraged by him; who lay their hands to the plough of duty, shall have them strengthened with the promises of mercy; and those who mend of their fathers faults, not only cut off the entail of the curse, but have it turned into a blessing.

2. What the discouragements were which they had hitherto laboured under, *ver. 10*. These are mentioned as a foil to the blessings God was now about to bestow upon them, to make them appear the more *strange*, to the glory of God, and the more *sweet*, to their comfort. The truth was, the times had long been very bad, and the calamities and difficulties of them were many and great; (1.) *Trade was dead*, there was nothing to be *done*, and therefore nothing to be got. *Before these days* of reformation began, *there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beasts*; the fruits of the earth (tho' it had long lain fallow, and therefore one would think should be the more fertile) were thin and poor: so that the husbandman had no occasion to *hire* harvest people to reap his corn, or teams to carry it home, for it came next to nothing. Merchants had no goods to import or export, so that they needed not to hire either man or beasts; by which means the poor people that lived by their labour had no way of getting bread for themselves and their families. (2.) *Travelling was dangerous*; so that all commerce both by sea and land was cut off, nay none durst stir abroad so much as to visit their friends, for *there was no peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction* the Samaritans and Ammonites, and other their evil neighbours, made inroads upon them in small parties, and seized all they could lay their hands on; the roads were infested with highway men, and both city and country with house-breakers, so that neither mens persons nor their goods were safe at home or abroad. (3.) *There was no such thing as friendship or good neighbourhood among them*; *I set all men every one against his neighbour*. In this there was a great deal of sin, for these wars and fightings came from mens lusts, and this God was not the author of; but there was in it a great deal of misery also, and so God was in it a just avenger of their disobedience to him; because they were of an *evil spirit* towards him, a spirit of contradiction to his laws, God sent among them an evil spirit, to make them vexatious one to another; those that throw off the love of God, forfeit the comfort of brotherly love.

3. What encouragement they shall now have to proceed in the good work they are about, and to hope that it shall yet be well with them. *Thus and thus* you have been harrassed and afflicted, *but now* God will change his way towards you, *ver. 11*. Now you return to your duty, God will comfort you according to the time that he has afflicted you; the ebbing tide shall flow again. (1.) God will not proceed in his controversy with them. *I will not be to them as in the former days*. Note, It is with us well or ill according as God is to us, for every creature is that to us which he makes it to be. And if we walk not contrary to God *as in the former days*, he will not walk contrary to us *as in the former days*; for it is only *with the froward* that he will *wrestle*. (2.) They shall have great plenty and abundance of all good things, *ver. 12. The seed sown shall be prosperous*, and yield a great increase, *the vine shall give her fruit* which makes glad the heart, and *the ground* its products which strengthen the heart; they shall have all they can desire, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight. *The heavens shall give their dew*, without which the earth would not yield her increase; which is a constant intimation to us of the beneficence of the God of heaven to men on earth, and their dependence upon him. It is said of a *sweeping rain*, that it *leaves no food*, *Prov. xxviii. 3*. but here the *gentle dew* waters the earth, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. And thus God will *cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things*. They are but a *remnant*, a *residue*, very few, one would think scarce worth looking after, but now they are at work for God, he will take care they shall want nothing that is fit for them. This confirms what the prophet's colleague had said a little before, *Hag. ii. 16, 19. From this day will I bless you*. Note, God's people that serve him faithfully have great possessions; *all is yours*, for you are Christ's. (3.) They shall recover their credit among their neighbours, *ver. 13. Ye were a curse among the heathen*. Every one censured and condemned them, spake ill of them, and wished ill to them, upon the account of the great disgrace that they were under; some think they were made a form of execration, so that if a man would load his enemy with the heaviest curse he would say, *God make thee like a Jew!* But now, *I will save you, and you shall be a blessing*. Your restoration shall be as much taken notice of to your honour, as ever your desolation and dispersion was to your reproach, you shall be applauded and admired as much as ever you were vilified and run down; shall be courted and caressed, as much as ever you were slighted and abandoned. Most men smile or frown upon their neighbours, according as providence smiles or frowns upon them; but those whom God plainly blesteth as his own, shews favour to, and puts honour upon, we ought also to respect, and be kind to. The blessed of the Lord are the blessing of the land, and should be so accounted by us. This is here promised to the house both of Israel and Judah, for many of the ten tribes returned out of captivity with the two tribes,

tribes, and shared with them in those blessings; and, it is probable, besides what came at first, many, very many, flocked to them afterwards, when they saw their affairs take this turn. (4.) God himself will determine to do them good, *ver. 14, 15*. All their comforts take rise from the thoughts of the love God had towards them, *Jer. xxix. 11*. Compare these promises with the former threatenings, (1.) When they *provoked him* to anger with *their sins*, he said he would *punish them*, and *so he did*; it was his declared purpose to bring destroying judgments upon them, and because they repented not of their rebellions against him, *he repented not* of his threatenings against them, but let the sentence of the law take its course. Note, God's punishing of sinners is never a sudden and hasty resolve, but is always the product of *thought*, and there is a *counsel* in that part of the *will of God*. And if the sinner *turn not*, God will not turn. (2.) Now they *pleased him with their services*, he said he would *do them good*, and will he not be as true to his promises, as he was to his threatenings! no doubt he will, *so again have I thought to do well to Jerusalem in those days*, when you begin to hearken to the voice of God speaking to you by his prophets; and these thoughts also shall be performed.

4. The use they are to make of these encouragements;

1. Let them take the comfort which these promises give to them. *Fear ye not*, *ver. 15*. *Let your hands be strong*, *ver. 9*. and both together, *ver. 13*. *Fear not, but let your hands be strong*. (1.) The difficulties they met with in their work must not drive them from it, or make them go on heavily in it, for the issue would be *good* and the reward *great*. Let this therefore animate them to proceed with vigour and cheerfulness. (2.) The dangers they were exposed to from their enemies must not terrify them; those that have God for them, engaged to do them good, need not fear *what man can do against them*.

2. Let them do the duty which those promises call for from them, *ver. 16, 17*. The very same duties which the former prophets pressed upon their fathers from the consideration of the wrath threatened, *chap. vii. 9, 10*. this prophet presseth upon them from the consideration of the mercy promised. Leave it to God to perform for you what he has promised, in his own way and time, but upon condition that you make conscience of your duty. *These are the things then that ye shall do*; this is your part of the covenant; the articles which ye are to perform, fulfil, and keep, that you may not put a bar in your own door, and stop the current of God's favours. (1.) You must never tell a lie, but always speak as you think, and as the matter is to the best of your knowledge. *Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour*, both in bargains and in common converse; dread every word that looks like a lie. This precept the apostle quotes, *Eph. iv. 25*. and backs it with this reason, *We are members one of another*. (2.) Those that are intrusted with the administration of publick justice must see to it, not only that none be wronged by it, but that those who are wronged be righted by it. *Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates*. Let the judges that sit in the gates in all their judicial proceedings have regard both to *truth* and to *peace*; let them take care both to do justice, and to accommodate differences, and prevent vexatious suits. It must be a *judgment of truth* in order to *peace*, and making those friends that were at variance, and a judgment of *peace*, as far as is consistent with *truth*, and no further. (3.) No man must bear malice against his neighbour upon any account, this is the same with what we had, *chap. vii. 10*. we must not only keep our hands from doing evil, but we must watch over our hearts, that they *imagine not any evil* against our neighbour, *Prov. iii. 29*. Injury and mischief must be crushed in the thought, in the embryo. (4.) Great reverence must be had of an oath, and conscience made of it, never take a false oath, nay, *love no false oath*; i. e. hate it, dread it, keep at a distance from it. Love not to impose oaths upon others, lest they swear falsely; love not that any should take a false oath for your benefit, and forswear themselves to do you a kindness. Here is a very good reason against all these corrupt and wicked practices annexed, for *all these are things that I hate*, and therefore you must hate them, if you expect to have God your friend. These things here forbidden are all of them found among the *seven things which the Lord hates*, *Prov. vi. 16, 19*. Note, We must forbear sin, not only because God is angry at it, and therefore it is dangerous to us, but because he hates it, and therefore it ill becomes us, and is a very ungrateful thing.

18. ¶ And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, 19. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace. 20. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, *It shall yet come to pass*, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities. 21. And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. 22. Yea,

many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. 23. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.

Here are two precious promises in these verses, for the further encouragement of these pious Jews, that were hearty in building the temple.

1. That a happy period shall be put to their fasts, and there shall be no more occasion for them, but they shall be converted into thanksgiving days, *ver. 19*. This is a direct answer to the enquiry concerning their fasts, *chap. vii. 3*. Those of them that fasted in hypocrisy, had their doom in the foregoing chapter, but those that in sincerity humbled themselves before God, and sought his face, have here a comfortable assurance given them of a large share in the happy times approaching. The *four yearly fasts* they had religiously observed, should be to the house of Judah, *joy and gladness, and solemn feasts*, and those *cheerful ones*. Note, Joyous times will come to the church after troublous times; if weeping endure for more than a night, and joy come not the next morning, yet the morning will come that will introduce it at length. And when God comes towards us in ways of mercy, we must meet him with joy and thankfulness, when God turns judgments into mercies, we must turn fasts into festivals, and thus *walk after the Lord*. And those who *sow in tears* with Zion, shall *reap in joy* with her; that submit to the restraints of her solemn fasts while they continue, shall share in the triumphs of her *cheerful feasts* when they come, *Isa. lxvi. 10*. The inference from this promise is, *therefore love the truth and peace*; i. e. be faithful and honest in all your dealings, and let it be a pleasure to you to be so, tho' thereby you cut yourselves short of those gains which you see others get dishonestly; and, as much as in you lies, live peaceable with all men, and be in your element when you are *in charity*. Let the *truths* of God rule in our heads, and let the *peace* of God rule in our hearts.

2. That a great accession shall be made to the church, by the conversion of many foreigners, *ver. 20—23*. This was fulfilled but in part, when in the latter times of the Jewish church there were abundance of proselytes, from all the countries about, and some that lay very remote who came yearly to worship at Jerusalem; which added very much both to the grandeur and wealth of that city, and contributed greatly to the making of it so considerable as it came to be before our Saviour's time, though now it was but just peeping out of its ruins. But it would be accomplished much more fully in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ, and the incorporating of them with the believing Jews in one great body, under Christ the head; a *mystery* which is *made manifest* by the *scriptures of the prophets*, *Rom. xvi. 26*. and by this among the rest, which makes it strange that when it was accomplished, it was so great a surprize and stumbling-block to the Jews: Observe,

1. Who they are that shall be added to the church, *people and the inhabitants of many cities*, *ver. 20*. not only a few ignorant country people that may be easily imposed upon, or some idle people that have nothing else to do, but intelligent, inquisitive citizens, men of business and acquaintance with the world, shall embrace the gospel of Christ. *Yea many people and strong nations*, *ver. 22*. some of *all languages*, *ver. 23*. By this it appears that they are brought into the church not by human persuasion, for they are of different *languages*; not by external force, for they are *strong nations*, able to have kept their ground if they had been so attacked, but purely by the effectual working of divine truth and grace. Note, God has his remnant in all parts; and in the general assembly of the church of the first-born, some will be found out of *all nations and kindreds*. *Rev. vii. 9*.

2. How their accession to the church is described; they shall come to *pray before the Lord*, and to *seek the Lord of hosts*, *ver. 21*. and to shew that this is the main matter in which their conversion consists, it is repeated, *ver. 22*. they shall *come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem*, and to *pray before the Lord*. No mention is made of their offering sacrifices, not only because these were not expected from the *proselytes of the gate*, but because when the Gentiles should be brought in, sacrifice and offering should be quite abolished. See who are to be accounted converts to God, and members of the church: and all that are converts to God are members of the church. (1.) They are such as *seek the Lord of hosts*, that enquire for God *their maker*, covet and court his favour, and are truly desirous to know his mind and will, and sincerely devoted to his honour and glory, *this is the generation of them that seek him*. (2.) They are such as *pray before the Lord*; that make a conscience, and make a business, of the duty of prayer; that *dare not*, that *would not* for all the world, live without it; that by prayer pay their homage to God, own their dependence upon him, maintain their communion with him, and fetch in mercy and grace from him. (3.) They are such as

herein have an eye to the divine revelation and institution ; which is signified by their doing this in *Jerusalem*, the place which God had chosen, where his word was, where his temple was, that was a type of Christ and his mediation, which all faithful worshippers will have a believing regard to.

3. How unanimous they shall be in their accession to the church, and how zealous in exciting one another to it, *ver. 21. The inhabitants of one city shall go to another*, as formerly when they went up from all parts of the country to worship at the yearly feasts, and they shall say, *Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, I will go also.* This intimates, (1.) That those who are brought into an acquaintance with Christ themselves, should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him ; thus Andrew invited Peter to Christ, and Philip invited Nathanael. True grace hates monopolies. (2.) That those who are rightly sensible of their need of Christ, and of the favour of God through him, will stir up themselves and others without delay to hasten to him ; *Let us go speedily to pray* ; it is for our lives and the lives of our souls that we are to petition, and therefore it concerns us to lose no time, in a matter of such moment delays are dangerous. (3.) That our communion with God is very much assisted and furthered by the communion of saints. It is pleasant going to the house of God in company, *Psal. lv. 14. with the multitude*, *Psal. xlii. 4.* and of good use to those that do so to excite one another to go speedily, and lose no time, we should be glad when it is said to us, *Let us go*, *Psal. cxxii. 1.* As iron sharpens iron, so may good men sharpen the countenances and spirits one of another in that which is good. (4.) That those who stir up others to that which is good, must take heed that they do not turn off, or tire, or draw back themselves, lie that faith, *Let us go*, *faith I will go also.* What good we put others upon doing, we must see to it that we do ourselves, else we shall be judged out of our own mouths. Not, do you go, and I will stay at home ; but do you go, and I will go with you. A singular pattern (faith Pemble) of zealous charity that neither leaves others behind, nor turns others before it.

4. Upon what inducement they shall join themselves to the church, not for the church's sake but for his sake who dwells in it, *ver. 23. Ten men of different nations and languages shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew*, begging of him not to out-go them but to take them along with him ; this speaks the great honour they have for a Jew as one of the chosen people of God, and therefore well worthy their acquaintance ; they cannot all come to take him by the hand, or embrace him in their arms, but are ambitious to take hold of the skirt of his robe, to touch the hem of his garment, saying, *we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.* The gospel was preached to the Jews first (for of that nation the apostles were) and by them it was carried to the Gentiles. St Paul was a Jew whose skirt many took hold of, when they welcomed him as an angel of God, and begged of him to take them along with him to Christ ; thus the Greeks took hold of Philip's skirt saying ; *Sir, we would see Jesus*, *John xii. 21.* Note, It is the privilege of the saints that they have God with them, have him among them ; the knowledge and fear and worship of him ; they have his favour and gracious presence ; and this should invite us into communion with them, it is good being with those that have God with them, and those who join themselves to the Lord, must join themselves to his disciples ; if we take God for our God, we must take his people for our people, cast in our lot among them, and be willing to take our lot with them.

CHAP. IX.

At this chapter begins another sermon which is continued to the end of chap. xi. and it is called, The burthen of the word of the Lord ; for every word of God has weight in it to those that regard it, and will be a heavy weight upon those that do not, a dead weight. Here is (1.) A prophecy against the Jews unrighteous neighbours, the Syrians, Tyrians, Philistines, and others, *ver. 1—6.* with an intimation of mercy to some of them in their conversion, *ver. 7.* a promise of mercy to God's people in their protection, *ver. 8.* (2.) A prophecy of their righteous king, the Messiah, and his coming with a description of him, *ver. 9.* and of his kingdom, the nature and extent of it, *ver. 10.* (3.) An account of the obligation the Jews lay under to Christ, for their deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon, *ver. 11, 12.* (4.) A prophecy of the victories and successes God would grant to the Jews over their enemies, as typical of our great deliverance by Christ, *ver. 13, 14, 15.* (5.) A promise of great plenty, and joy, and honour, which God had in reserve for his people, *ver. 16, 17.* which was written for their encouragement.

1. THE burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof : when the eyes of man, as of all No. lxxviii.

the tribes of Israel shall be toward the LORD. 2. And Hamath also shall border thereby ; Tyrus and Zidon, though it be very wise. 3. And Tyrus did build her self a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. 4. Behold, the LORD will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea, and she shall be devoured with fire. 5. Ashkelon shall see it, and fear ; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron : for her expectation shall be ashamed, and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. 6. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. 7. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth ; but he that remaineth, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. 8. And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth ; and no oppressor shall pass through them any more : for now have I seen with mine eyes.

After the precious promises we had in the foregoing chapter of favour to God's people, their persecutors that hated them come to be reckoned with ; those particularly that bordered close upon them.

1. The Syrians had been ill neighbours to Israel, and God has a controversy with them. The word of the Lord shall be a burthen in the land of Hadrach, i. e. of Syria ; but it doth not appear why it was so called. That that kingdom is meant is plain, because Damascus, the metropolis of that kingdom, is said to be the rest of this burthen, i. e. The judgments here threatened shall light and lie upon that city, those are miserable upon whom the burthen of the word of the Lord rests ; upon whom the wrath of God abides, *John iii. 36.* for it is a weight that they can neither shake off, nor bear up under, there are those whom God causeth his fury to rest upon ; whom the wrath of God makes its mark, it will be sure to hit ; whom it makes its rest, it will be sure to sink. And the reason of this burthen's resting on Damascus is because the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, (or rather, even of all the tribes of Israel) are towards the Lord, i. e. Because the people of God, by faith and prayer, look up to him for succour and relief, and depend upon him to take their part against their enemies. Note, It is a sign God is about to appear remarkably for his people, when he raiseth their believing expectations from him and dependence upon him ; and when by his grace he turns them from idols to himself ; *Isa. xvii. 7, 8.* at that day shall a man look to his Maker. It may be read thus, for the Lord has an eye upon man and upon all the tribes of Israel ; i. e. He is King of nations as well as King of saints ; governs the world as well as the church, and therefore will punish the sins of other people, as well as those of his own people. God is Judge of all, and therefore all must give account of themselves to him. When St Paul was converted at Damascus and preached there, and disputed with the Jews, then the word of the Lord might be said to rest there, and then the eyes of men, of other men besides the tribes of Israel, began to be towards the Lord ; see *Acts ix. 22.* Hamath a country which lay north of Damascus, and which we often read of, shall border thereby, *ver. 2.* it joins to Syria, and shall share in the burthen of the word of the Lord, that rests upon Damascus. The Jews have a proverb, *Wo to the wicked man, and wo to his neighbour*, who is in danger of partaking in his sins, and in his plagues : wo to the land of Hadrach, and wo to Hamath that borders thereby.

2. Tyre and Zidon come next to be called to an account, here as in other prophecies, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* Observe here,

(1.) Tyrus flourishing, thinking herself very safe, and ready to set God's judgments not only at a distance, but at defiance, for (1.) She is very wise ; it is spoken ironically, she thinks herself very wise, and able to out-wit even the wisdom of God ; it is granted, her king is a great politician, her statesmen are so *Ezek. xxviii. 3.* But with all their wit and policy they shall not be able to evade the judgments of God when they come with commission, there is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord ; nay it is his honour to take the wise in their own craftiness. (2.) She is very strong, and well fortified, both by nature and art. Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, which she thought could never be brought down or got over. (3.) She is very rich, and money is a defence, it is the sinews of war, *Eccl. vii. 12.* By her vast trade she hath heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets, i. e. she has an abundance of it ; heaps of silver as common as heaps of sand. *Job xxvii. 16.* Solomon made silver to be in Jerusalem as the stones of the streets, but Tyre went further, and made fine gold to be as the mire of the streets. It were well if we could all learn so to look upon it, in comparison with the merchandise of wisdom and grace, and the gains thereof.

(2.) Tyrus falling, after all; her wisdom and wealth and strength shall not be able to secure her, ver. 4. *The Lord will cast her out of that strong hold wherein she has fortified herself, will make her poor*, so some read it; there have been instances of those that have fallen from the height of plenty to the depth of poverty, and great riches have come to nothing, God will *smite her power in the sea*; her being surrounded by the water shall not secure her, but *she shall be devoured with fire*, and burnt down to the ground. Tyrus being seated in the midst of the water, one would have thought was in danger to be some time or other overflowed or washed away by that, yet God chuseth to destroy it by the contrary element; sometimes he brings ruin upon his enemies by those means which they least suspect. Water enough was nigh at hand to have quenched the flames of Tyre, and yet by them she shall be *devoured*; for who can put out the fire which the breath of the Almighty blows up?

3. God next contends with the Philistines, with their great cities and great lords, that bordered southward upon Israel. (1.) They shall be alarmed and affrighted by the word of the Lord lighting and resting upon Damascus; ver. 5. the disgraces of Israel had many a time been *published in the streets of Ashkelon*, and they had triumphed in them; but now *Ashkelon shall see the ruin of her friends and allies, and shall fear, Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron*; concluding that their own turns come next, now the cup of trembling goes round; what will become of *their house when their neighbour's is on fire*? They had looked upon Tyre and Zidon as a barrier to their country, but when those strong cities were ruined their *expectations* from them were *ashamed*; as our expectation from all creatures will be in the issue.

(2.) They shall themselves be ruined and wasted. (1.) The government shall be dissolved, *The king shall perish from Gaza* not only the present king shall be cut off, but there shall be no succession, no successor. (2.) The cities shall be dispeopled, *Ashkelon shall not be inhabited*, the rightful owners shall be expelled, either slain or carried into captivity. (3.) Foreigners shall take possession of their land, and become masters of all its wealth, ver. 6. *A bastard shall dwell in Ashdod*, a spurious brood of strangers shall enter upon the inheritances of the natives, which they have no more right to than a bastard has to the estates of the legitimate children. And thus God will *cut off the pride of the Philistines*, all that strength and wealth which they prided themselves in, and which was the ground of their confidence in themselves, and their contempt of the Israel of God. This prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines and of Damascus and Tyre was accomplished not long after this by Alexander the Great, who ravaged all these countries with his victorious army, took the cities, and planted colonies in them; which Quintus Curtius gives a particular account of in the history of his conquests. And some think he is meant by the *bastard* that shall dwell in Ashdod, for his mother Olympia owned him begotten in adultery, but pretended it was by Jupiter. The Jews afterwards got ground of the Philistines, Syrians, and others their neighbours, took some of their cities from them and possessed their countries, as appears by the histories of Josephus, and the Maccabees, and this was foretold before, Zeph. ii. 4. &c. Obad. ver. 20.

(3.) Some among them shall be converted and brought home to God, by his gospel and grace; so some understand, ver. 7. as a promise, (1.) That God would take away the sins of these nations; *their blood, and their abominations*, their cruelties and their idolatries, God will part between them and these sins which they have rolled under their tongue as a sweet morsel, and are as loth to part with as men are to part with the meat out of their mouths; and which they held fast between their teeth. Nothing is too hard for the grace of God to do. (2.) That he would accept of a remnant of them for his own. *He that remaineth shall be for our God*, God would preserve a remnant even of these nations that should be the monuments of his mercy and grace, and be set apart for him; and the disadvantages of their birth shall be no bar to their acceptance with God, but a Philistine shall be as acceptable to God upon gospel-terms, as one of Judah, nay, as a governor, or chief one in Judah, and a man of Ekron shall be as a Jebusite, or a man of Jerusalem, as a proselyted Jebusite, as Arunnah the Jebusite, 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. In Christ Jesus there is no distinction of nations, but all are one in him, all alike welcome to him.

4. In all this God intends mercy for Israel, and it is in kindness to them that God will deal thus with the neighbouring nations, to avenge their quarrel for what is passed, and to secure them for the future. Thus some understand the seventh verse, as intimating, (1.) That thus God would deliver his people from their bloody adversaries, that hated them, and to whom they were an abomination, then when they were just ready to devour them, and make a prey of them, *I will take away his blood*, i. e. the blood of Israel, out of the mouth of the Philistines, and *from between their teeth*, Amos iii. 12. when in their hatred of them and enmity to them they were greedily devouring them. (2.) That he would thus give them victory and dominion over them, and *he that remaineth*, i. e. the remnant of Israel, shall be *for our God*, shall be taken into his favour, shall own him, and be owned by him, and *he shall be as a governor in Judah*; though the

Jews have long been in servitude, they shall recover their ancient dignity, and be victorious as David, and other governors in Judah formerly were; and Ekron, i. e. the Philistines, shall be as the Jebusites, and the rest of the devoted nations were, brought into subjection under them.

However, this is plainly the sense of ver. 8. that God will take his people under his special protection, and therefore will weaken their neighbours, that it may not be in their power to do them a mischief. *I will encamp about my house because of the army*. Note, God's house lies in the midst of an enemy's country, and his church is as a lily among thorns; and therefore God's power and goodness are to be observed in the special preservation of it. The *camp of the saints* being a *little flock* in comparison with the numerous armies of the powers of darkness that are set against it round about, would certainly be swallowed up, if the angels of God did not encamp about it, as they did about Elifha, to deliver it, Rev. xx. 9. Psal. xxxiv. 7. when the times are more than ordinary perilous, when armies are marching and counter-marching, and all bearing ill-will to Zion, then providence will as it were *double its guards* upon the church of God, *because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth*, that whether he return a conqueror or conquered he may do it no harm. And as none that *pass by* shall hurt them, so *no oppressor shall pass through them any more*; they shall have no enemy within themselves to rule them with rigour, and to *make their lives bitter* to them with *fore bondage*, as of old in Egypt. This was fulfilled, when, for some time after the struggles of the Maccabees, Judea was a free and flourishing state; or perhaps when Alexander the Great, struck with an awe of Jaddus the high-priest, favoured the Jews, and took them under his protection, at the same time when he wasted the neighbouring countries. And the reason given for all this is, *for now have I seen with mine eyes*, now have I carefully distinguished between *my people* and *other people*, with whom before they seemed to have had their lot in common, and have made it to appear, that I know them that are mine. This agrees with Psal. xxxiv. 15. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous*, now his eyes which *run to and fro through the earth* shall fix upon them, that he may shew himself tender of them, and *strong on their behalf*, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

9. ¶ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. 10. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. 11. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water.

That here begins a prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom, is plain from the literal accomplishment of the ninth verse, in, and its express application to, Christ's riding in triumph into Jerusalem, Matth. xxi. 5. John xii. 15.

1. Here is notice given of the approach of the Messiah promised, as matter of great joy to the Old Testament church; *behold, thy King cometh unto thee*. Christ is a king; invested with regal powers, and prerogatives; a sovereign prince, an absolute monarch; having all power both in heaven and on earth. He is Zion's king; God hath *set him upon his holy hill of Zion*, Psal. ii. 7. In Zion his glory, as a king, shines; thence his *law went forth*, even the *word of the Lord*; in the gospel church his spiritual kingdom is administered; it is by him that the ordinances of the church are instituted, and its officers commissioned; and it is taken under his protection, he fights the church's battles, and secures its interests, as its king. This king has been long in coming, but now *behold, he cometh*; he is at the door, there are but a few ages more to run out, and he that shall come will come; he *cometh unto thee*; the Word will shortly be made flesh, and dwell within thy borders; he will *come to his own*. And therefore *rejoice, rejoice greatly, and shout for joy*, look upon it as *good news*, and be assured it is true; please thyself to think that he is *coming*, that he is on his way towards thee; and be ready to go forth to meet him with acclamations of joy; as one not able to conceal it, it is so *great*, nor ashamed to own it, it is so *just*, cry *hosanna* to him; Christ's approaches ought to be the church's applauses.

2. Here is such a description of him as renders him very amiable in the eyes of all his loving subjects, and his coming to them very acceptable. (1.) He is a *righteous ruler*; all his acts of government will be exactly according to the rules of equity, for *he is just*. (2.) He is a *powerful protector* to all those that bear faith and true allegiance to him, for he *hath salvation*, he hath it in his power, he hath it to bestow upon all his subjects; he is the *God of salvation*; treasures of salvation are in him. He is *servatus*, *saving himself*, so some read it, rising out of the grave by his own power,

power, and so qualifying himself to be our Saviour. (3.) He is a *meek humble tender father* to all his subjects as his children; he is *lowly*; he is *poor* and *afflicted*, so the word signifies; so it notes the meanness of his condition, having *emptied himself*, he was *despised* and *rejected of men*. But the evangelist translates it so as to speak the temper of his spirit, he is *meek*, not taking state upon him, or resenting injuries, but *humbling himself* from first to last; condescending to the mean, compassionate to the miserable; this was a bright and excellent character of him as a prophet, *Matth. xi. 29. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, and no less so as a king. It was a proof of this, that when he made his publick entry into his own city (and it was the only passage of his life that had any thing in it magnificent in the eye of the world) he chose to ride not upon a stately horse, or in a chariot, as great men used to ride, but *upon an ass*, a beast of service indeed, but a poor silly and contemptible one, low, and slow, and in those days ridden only by the meaner sort of people, nor was it an ass fitted for use, but an *ass's colt*, a little foolish unmanageable thing, that would be more likely to disgrace his rider than be any credit to him, and that not *his own* neither; nor helped off, as sometimes a sorry horse is, by good furniture, for he had no saddle, no housings, no trappings, no equipage, but his disciples clothes thrown upon the colt; for he *made himself of no reputation*, when he visited us in great humility.

3. His kingdom is here set forth in the glory of it; this king has, and will have a kingdom, not of this world, but a spiritual kingdom, a *kingdom of heaven*. (1.) It shall not be set up and advanced by external force, by an arm of flesh, or weapons of warfare that are carnal, no, he *will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horses from Jerusalem*, ver. 10. for he shall have no occasion for them while he himself *rides upon an ass*. He will in kindness to his people cut off their horses and chariots, that they may not cut themselves off from God, by putting that confidence in them, which they should put in the power of God only: He will himself undertake their protection, will himself be a *wall of fire about Jerusalem*, and give his angels charge concerning it, those *chariots of fire and horses of fire*, and then the chariots and horses they had had in their service shall be discarded and cut off, as altogether needless. (2.) It shall be propagated and established by the preaching of the gospel, the *speaking of peace to the heathen*; for Christ came and preached peace to them that were *afar off*, and to them *that were nigh*; and so established his kingdom, by proclaiming *on earth peace, and good will towards men*. (3.) His kingdom, as far as it prevails in the minds of men, and has the ascendent over them will make them peaceable, and slay all enmities; it will cut off the battle-bow, and *beat swords into plow-shares*, it will not only command the peace, but will *create the fruit of the lips peace*. (4.) It shall extend itself to all parts of the world, in defiance of the opposition given to it. The *chariot and horse* that came against Ephraim and Jerusalem, to oppose the progress of Zion's king, shall be cut off, his gospel shall be preached to the world, and be received among the heathen, so that *his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth*, as was foretold by David, *Psal. lxxii. 8*. The preachers of the gospel shall carry it from one country, one island to another, till some of the remotest corners of the world are enlightened and reduced by it.

4. Here is an account of the great benefit procured for mankind by the Messiah, which is redemption from extremest misery, typified by the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, ver. 11. *As for thee also, thee, O daughter of Jerusalem; or thee, O Messiah the prince, by the blood of thy covenant*, i. e. by force and virtue of the covenant made with Abraham, sealed with the blood of circumcision, and the covenant made with Israel at mount Sinai, sealed with the blood of sacrifices, in pursuance and performance of that covenant, *I have now of late sent forth thy prisoners, thy captives, out of Babylon*, which was to them a most uncomfortable place, as a *pit* in which was *no water*. It was part of the covenant, that if in the land of their captivity they sought the Lord, he would be found of them, *Lev. xxvii. 42, 44, 45. Deut. xxx. 4*. It was *by the blood of that covenant* typifying the blood of Christ, in whom all God's covenants with man are yea, and amen, that they were released out of captivity, and this was but a shadow of the great salvation wrought out by *thy king, O daughter of Zion*. Note, A sinful state is a state of bondage; it is a spiritual prison; it is a *pit* or a *dungeon*, in which *there is no water*, no comfort at all to be had, we are all by nature prisoners in this pit; the *scripture has concluded us all under sin*, and bound us over to the justice of God. God is pleased to deal upon new terms with these prisoners, to enter into another covenant with them; the blood of Christ is the blood of that covenant, purchased it for us, and all the benefits of it; by that blood of the covenant, effectual provision is made for the sending forth of these prisoners upon easy and honourable terms, and proclamation made of liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, like Cyrus's proclamation to the Jews in Babylon, which all those whose spirits God stirreth up will come and take the benefit of.

12. ¶ Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope, even to day do I declare, *that I will render double unto thee*: 13. When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man: 14. And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. 15. The LORD of hosts shall defend them, and they shall devour, and subdue with sling-stones, and they shall drink, *and make a noise as through wine*, and they shall be filled like bowls, *and as the corners of the altar*. 16. And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people, for *they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land*. 17. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.

The prophet having taught those that were returned out of captivity to attribute their deliverance to the *blood of the covenant*, and to the promise of the Messiah, for therefore they were so wonderfully helped because that blessing was in them, was yet in the womb of their nation, now comes to encourage them with the prospect of a joyful and happy settlement, and of glorious times before them; and such a happiness they did enjoy in a great measure for some time, but these promises have their full accomplishment in the spiritual blessings of the gospel, which we enjoy by Jesus Christ.

1. They are invited to look unto Christ and fly unto him as their city of refuge, ver. 12. *Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope*. The Jews that were returned out of captivity into their own land were yet in effect but *prisoners*, we are servants this day, *Neh. ix. 36*. yet *prisoners of hope*, or *expectation*, for God had given them a *little reviving in their bondage*, Ezra ix. 8, 9. Those that yet continued in Babylon, detained by their affairs there, yet lived *in hope* some time or other to see their own land again; now both these are directed to turn their eyes upon the Messiah, set before them in the promise, as *their strong-hold*, to shelter themselves in him, and stay themselves upon him, for the *perfecting* of the mercy which by his grace, and for his sake, was so gloriously begun, *look unto him and be ye saved*, Isa. xlv. 2. The promise of the Messiah was the *strong-hold* of the faithful long before his coming; they saw his day at a distance and were glad, and the believing expectation of this *redemption in Jerusalem* was long the support and *consolation of Israel*, Luke ii. 25, 38. They in their dangers and distresses were ready to turn towards this and the other creature for relief, but the prophets directed them still to *turn to Christ*, and to comfort themselves with the joy of their king coming to them *with salvation*. But as their deliverance was typical of our redemption by Christ, ver. 11. so this invitation to the strong-hold speaks the language of the gospel call. Sinners are *prisoners*, but they are *prisoners of hope*; their case is *sad*, but it is not *desperate*; yet now there is *hope in Israel* concerning them, Christ is a *strong-hold* for them, a strong tower in whom they may be safe, and quiet from the fear of the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the assaults of their spiritual enemies, *to him they must turn by a lively faith*, to him they must fly, and trust in his name.

2. They are assured of God's favour to them. *Even to day do I declare*, when things are at the worst, and you think your case deplorable to the last degree, yet I solemnly promise that *I will render double unto thee*; to thee, O Jerusalem, to every one of you prisoners of hope; I will give you comforts *double* to the sorrows you have experienced; or, blessings double to what I ever bestowed upon your fathers, when their condition was at the best, the glory of your latter state, as well as of your latter house shall be greater, shall be twice as great as that of your former. And so it was no otherwise but by the coming of the Messiah, the preaching of his gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom. These spiritual blessings in heavenly things were double to what they had ever enjoyed in their most prosperous state. As a pledge of this, in the fulness of time, God here promiseth to the Jews victory, plenty, and joy in their own land, which yet should be but a type and shadow of more glorious victories, riches, and joys, in the kingdom of Christ.

1. They shall *triumph over their enemies*; the Jews after their return were surrounded with enemies on all sides, they were as a *speckled bird*, all the birds of the field were against them, their land lay between the two potent kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, branches of the Grecian monarchy, and what frequent dangers they should be in between them was foretold, *Dan. xi*. But it is here promised, that out of them all, the Lord would deliver them, and this promise had its primary accomplishment in the times of the Maccabees, when the Jews made head against their enemies,

enemies, kept their head above water, and after many struggles and difficulties came to be head over them. It is promised,

(1.) That they shall be instruments in God's hand, for the defeating and baffling of their persecutors. *I have bent Judah for me, as my bow of steel, that bow I have filled with Ephraim, as my arrows, have drawn it up to its full bent, till the arrow be at the head, for some think that is signified by the phrase of filling the bow; the expressions here are very fine, and the figures lively; Judah had been taught the use of the bow, 2 Sam. i. 18. and Ephraim had been famous for it, Psal. lxxviii. 9. But let them not think that they gain their successes by their own bow, for they themselves are no more but God's bow, and his arrows; tools in his hand which he makes use of, and manageth as he pleaseth, which he holds as his bow, and directs to the mark as his arrows. The best and bravest of men are but what God makes them, and do no more service than he enables them to do. The preachers of the gospel were the bow in Christ's hand, with which he went forth, he went on conquering and to conquer, Rev. vi. 2. The following words explain this, I have raised up and spirited thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece. This was fulfilled when against Antiochus one of the kings of the Grecian monarchy, the people that knew their God were strong and did exploits, Dan. xi. 32. And they in the hand of an almighty God were made as the sword of a mighty man, which none can stand before, wicked men are said to be God's sword, Psal. xvii. 13. and sometimes good men are made so, for he employs both as he pleaseth.*

(2.) That God will be captain and commander in chief over them in every expedition, and engagement, ver. 14. *The Lord shall be seen over them, he shall make it appear that he presides in their affairs, and that in all their motions they are under his conduct, as apparently, tho' not so sensibly, as he was seen over Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire, when he led them thro' the wilderness. (1.) Is their army to be raised or mustered, and brought into the field? the Lord shall blow the trumpet to gather the forces together, to proclaim the war, to sound the alarm, and to give directions which way to march, which way to move; for if God blow the trumpet it shall not give an uncertain sound, or a feeble ineffectual one. (2.) Is the army taking the field, and entering upon action? Whatever enterprise the campaign is opened with, God shall go forth at the head of their forces with whirlwinds of the south, which were of incredible swiftness and fierceness; and before these whirlwinds, thy sons, O Greece, shall be as chaff. (3.) Is the army actually engaged? God's arrow shall go forth as lightning, so strongly, so suddenly, so irresistibly: his lightnings shall go forth as arrows, see Psal. xviii. 14. He sent out his arrows and scattered them, i. e. he shot out his lightnings and discomfited them. This alludes to that which God had done for Israel of old, when he brought them out of Egypt, and into Canaan, and had its accomplishment, partly in the wonderful successes which the Jews had against their neighbours that attacked them in the time of the Maccabees, by the special appearances of the divine providence for them; and perfectly in the glorious victories gained by the cross of Christ, and the preaching of the cross over Satan, and all the powers of darkness, whereby we are made more than conquerors. (4.) Are they in danger of being over-powered by the enemy? The Lord of hosts shall defend them, ver. 15. The Lord their God shall save them, ver. 16. so that their enemies shall not prevail over them, or prey upon them. God shall be unto them for defence as well as offence, the shield of their help, as well as the sword of their excellency; and this as the Lord of hosts, who has power to defend them, and as their God, who is engaged by promise to defend them, and by the propriety he has in them. He shall save them in that day, that critical, dangerous day, as the flock of his people, with the same care and tenderness that the shepherd protects his sheep with. Those are safe whom God saves. (5.) Did their enemies hope to swallow them up? It shall be turned upon them, and they shall devour their enemies, and shall subdue with sling-stones, for want of better weapons, those that come forth against them. The stones of the brook when God pleaseth, shall do as great execution as the best train of artillery; for the stars in their courses shall fight on the same side. Goliath was subdued with a sling-stone. Having subdued, they shall devour, shall drink the blood of their enemies, as it were, and as conquerors use to do, they shall make a noise as through wine. It is usual for conquerors with loud huzzas and acclamations, to glory in their victories, and proclaim them. We read of those that shout for mastery, and of the shout of a king amongst God's people. They shall be filled with blood and spoil, as the bowls and basins of the temple, or the corners of the altar were used to be filled with the blood of the sacrifices; for their enemies shall fall as victims to divine justice.*

2. They shall triumph in their God. They shall take the comfort, and give God the glory of their successes. So some read, ver. 15. *They shall eat, i. e. they shall quietly enjoy what they have got; God will give them power to eat of it, after they have subdued the sling-stones, i. e. their enemies that slung stones at them; and they shall drink and make a noise, a joyful noise before the Lord their maker and protector, as through wine, as men use to be merry at a banquet of wine. Being not drunk with*

wine, wherein is excess, but filled with the Spirit, they shall speak to themselves and one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, as those that are drunk do with vain and foolish songs, Eph. v. 18, 19. And in the fulness of their joy they shall offer abundance of sacrifices to the honour of God, so that they shall fill both the bowls and the corners of the altar with the fat and blood of their sacrifices. And when they thus triumph in their successes, their joy shall terminate in God as their God, the God of their salvation. They shall triumph,

1. In the love he has for them, and the relation wherein they stand to him; that they are the flock of his people, and he is their shepherd, and that they are to him as the stones of a crown, which are very precious, and of great value, and which are kept under a strong guard: never was any king so pleased with the jewels of his crown, as God is and will be with his people, that are near and dear unto him, and in whom he glories. They are a crown of glory, and a royal diadem in his hand, Isa. lxii. 2, 3. *And they shall be mine, saith the Lord in that day, when I make up my jewels, Mal. iii. 17. And they shall be lifted up as an ensign upon his land, as the royal standard is displayed in token of triumph and joy, God's people are his glory, so he is pleased to make them, so he is pleased to reckon them. He sets them up as a banner upon his own land, waging war against those that hate him, to whom it is a flag of defiance, and a center of unity to all that love him, to all the children of God that are scattered abroad, who are invited to come and lift themselves under this banner, Isa. xi. 10, 12.*

2. In the provision he makes for them, ver. 15. This is the matter of their triumph, ver. 17. *For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!* This is the substance, this the burden, of the songs wherewith they shall make a noise before the Lord. We are here taught, (1.) To admire and praise the amiableness of God's being. *How great is his beauty!* All the perfections of God's nature conspire to make him infinitely lovely in the eyes of all that know him. They are to him as the stones of a crown, but what is he to them? Our business in the temple is to behold the beauty of the Lord, Psal. xxvii. 4. and *how great is that beauty!* How far doth it transcend all other beauties, particularly the beauty of his holiness. This may refer to the Messiah, to Zion's king that cometh, see that king in his beauty, Isa. xxxiii. 17. *who is fairer than the children of men, the fairest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Tho' in the eye of the world he had no form or comeliness, in the eye of faith how great is his beauty!* (2.) To admire and give thanks for the gifts of God's favour and grace; his bounty as well as his beauty, *for how great is his goodness!* How rich in mercy is he! How deep, how full are its springs! How various, how plenteous, how precious, are its streams! What a great deal of good doth God do! How rich in mercy is he! Here is an instance of his goodness to his people, *Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids, i. e. God will bless his people with an abundance of the fruits of the earth: whereas they had been afflicted with scarcity to that degree, that the young men and the maidens were ready to swoon and faint away for hunger and thirst, Lam. ii. 12, 21.—iv. 7, 8.—v. 10. Now they shall have bread enough, and to spare; not water only, but wine, new wine, which shall make the young people grow and be cheerful; and (which some have observed, to be the effect of plenty and the cheapness of corn) the poor will be encouraged to marry and re-people the land, when they shall have wherewithal to maintain their families. Note, What good gifts God bestows upon us, we must serve him cheerfully with them, and must trace the streams up to the fountain, and when we are refreshed with corn and wine must say, How great is his goodness!*

CHAP. X.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the chapter before, to encourage the Jews that were returned, with hopes, that tho' they had been under divine rebukes, for their negligence in rebuilding the temple, and were now surrounded with enemies and dangers; yet that God would do them good, and make them prosperous at home, and victorious abroad. Now, (1.) They are here directed to eye the great God in all events that were concerning them; and, both in the evils they suffered, and the comforts they desired, to acknowledge his hand, ver. 1—4. (2.) They are encouraged to expect strength and success from him, in all their struggles with the enemies of their church and state, and to hope that the issue would be glorious at last, ver. 5—12.

1. **A**SK ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain, so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field. 2. For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lye, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd. 3. Mine anger

anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle. 4. Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle-bow, out of him every oppressor together.

Gracious things and glorious ones, very glorious and very gracious were promised to this poor afflicted people, in the foregoing chapter; now here he intimates to them, that he will, *for these things, be enquired of* by them, and that he expects they should acknowledge him in all *their ways*, and in all *his ways* towards them; him and not *idols* that were rivals with him for their respects.

1. He directs them to apply themselves to God by prayer, for rain in the season thereof. He had promised in the close of the foregoing chapter, that there should be great plenty of corn and wine, whereas for several years, by reason of unseasonable weather, there had been great scarcity of both; but the earth will not yield its fruits, unless the heavens water it, and therefore they must look up to God for the *dew of heaven*, in order to the fatness and fruitfulness of the earth. *Ver. 1. Ask ye of the Lord rain.* Do not pray to the clouds, or to the stars for rain, but *to the Lord*; for he it is that *hears the heavens*, when they *hear the earth*, Hof. ii. 21. Seasonable rain is a great mercy, which we must *ask of God*; rain in the time of the *latter rain*, when there is most need of it: the *former rain* fell at the seed-time, in autumn; the *latter* fell in the *spring*, between March and May, which brought the corn to an ear, and filled it. If either of these rains failed, it was very bad with that land; for from the end of May to September, they never had any rain at all. Jerom, who lived in Judea, saith, he never saw any rain there in June or July. They are directed to ask for it *in the time* when it used to come. Note, We must in our prayers dutifully attend the course of providence; ask for mercies in their proper time, and not expect that God should go out of his usual way and method for us. But since sometimes God denied rain in the usual time, as a token of his displeasure, they must pray for it then as a token of his favour, and they shall not pray in vain. Ask, and it shall be given you; *so the Lord shall make bright clouds*, which, though they are *without rain* themselves, yet are prefaces of rain; *lightnings*, (so the margin reads it) for he *maketh lightnings for the rain*. He will *give them showers of rain*, in great abundance, and so give to *every one grass in the field*; for God is universally good, and *makes his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust*.

2. He shews them the folly of making their addresses to idols, as their fathers had done. *Ver. 2. The idols have spoken vanity*; the Teraphim which they courted and consulted in their distress, were so far from being able to command rain for them, that they could not so much as tell them when they should have rain. They pretended to promise them rain at such a time, but it did not come. *The diviners*, that were the prophets of those idols, have *seen a lie*; their visions were all a cheat and a sham, and *they have told false dreams*, such as the event did not answer, which proved that they were not from God. Thus they *comforted in vain* those that consulted the lying oracles; all the *vanities of the heathen* put together, could not *give rain*, Jer. xiv. 22. Yet this was not the worst of it; they not only got nothing by the false gods, but they lost the favour of the true God; for *therefore they went their way into captivity, as a flock driven into the fold*; and *they were troubled with one vexation after another, as scattered sheep use to be, because there was no shepherd*, no prince to rule them, no priest to intercede for them, none to take care of them, and keep them together. They that wandered after strange gods, were made to wander into strange nations.

3. He shews them the hand of God in all the events that were concerning them, both those that made against them, and those that made for them, *ver. 3. Let them consider, (1.) When every thing went cross, it was God that walked contrary to them, ver. 3. Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds* that should have fed the flock, but neglected it and starved it. I was displeased at the wicked magistrates and ministers, the idol shepherds; the captivity in Babylon was a token of God's anger against them; in it likewise he *punished the goats*, those of the flock that were filthy and mischievous, they were set on the left-hand, to go away into punishment. Though the body of the nation suffered in the captivity, yet it was only the *goats* and the *shepherds* that God was angry with, and that he punished; the same affliction to others came from the love of God, and was but a *fatherly chastisement*, which to them came from his wrath, and was a *judicial punishment*. (2.) When things began to change for the better, it was God that gave them the happy turn. He has now *visited his flock with favour*, to enquire after them, and provide what he finds proper for them, and he has made them *as his goodly horse in the battle*; has beautified them, taken care of them, managed and made use of them as a man doth the horse he rides on; has made them valuable in themselves, and formidable to those about them, *as his goodly horse*. It is God that makes us what we are, and it is with us as he appoints.

No. lxxviii.

4. He shews them that every creature is to them what God makes it to be, *ver. 4. Out of him came forth the corner; out of him the nail.* (1.) All the power that was engaged against them was from God; *out of him* came all the combined force of their enemies, every *oppressor together*; (and the oppressors of Israel were not a few) did but what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done; nor could they have had such power against them, unless it had been given them from above. (2.) All the power likewise that was engaged for them was derived from him, and depended on him. Out of him came forth *the corner stone* of the building, the power of magistrates which keeps the several parts of the state together. Princes are often called the *corners of the people*, as 1 Sam. xiv. 38. Out of him came forth *the nail* that fixeth the state, the *nail in the sure place*, Isa. xxii. 23. The *nail in his holy place*, Ezra ix. 8. Out of him came forth *the battle-bow*, the military power, and out of him *every oppressor*, or exactor, that has the civil power in his hand; and therefore to God the fountain of power we must always have an eye, and see every man's judgment proceeding from him.

5. ¶ And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down *their enemies* in the mire of the streets in the battle, and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded. 6. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I *am* the LORD their God, and will hear them. 7. And *they of Ephraim* shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad, their heart shall rejoice in the LORD. 8. I will hiss for them, and gather them, for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased. 9. And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries, and they shall live with their children, and turn again. 10. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria, and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, and *place* shall not be found for them. 11. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away. 12. And I will strengthen them in the LORD, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.

Here are divers precious promises made to the people of God, which look farther than to the state of the Jews in the latter days of their church, and have certain reference to the spiritual Israel of God, the gospel church, and all true believers.

1. They shall have God's favour and preference, and shall be owned and accepted of him. This is the foundation of all the rest, *The Lord is with them*, *ver. 5.* He espouses their cause, takes their part, is on their side, and if he be for them, who can be against them? Again, *ver. 6. I have mercy upon them.* All their dignity and joy is owing purely to God's mercy; and mercy as it supposeth misery, so it excludes merit. They had been cast off, the effect of which could not but be misery; they had been justly cast off, and therefore could pretend to merit nothing at God's hand, but wrath and the curse, yet it is promised *they shall be as though I had not cast them off*. The transgressions of their fathers, for which they had been rejected, shall not only not be visited upon them, but they shall not be so much as remembered against them: God will be so perfectly reconciled to them, as if he had never contended with them, and the falling out of these lovers shall rather be the renewing than the weakning of love. They shall have such a full assurance of God's being reconciled to them; and upon that shall be so well reconciled to themselves, that they shall be as easy as if they had never been cast off; and their condition after their restoration to the divine favour, shall be so very happy, that there shall not remain the least scar from the wounds which were given them by their being cast off. Such favour doth God shew to returning repenting sinners, that were by nature at a distance, and children of wrath; such fellowship are they admitted into, and such freedom doth he use with them, that they are *as though they had never been cast off*. (1.) The covenant they are admitted into, is the same that ever it was. *I am the Lord their God*, according to the original contract, the covenant made with their fathers. (2.) The communion they are admitted into, is the same that ever it was; *I will hear them*. They shall be as welcome as ever to speak to him, and as sure as ever to receive from him an answer of peace; for

for as he never did, so he never will say to Jacob's seed, *seek ye me in vain*.

2. They shall be victorious over their enemies, that would draw them from either their duty to God, or their comfort in God. *Ver. 5. They shall be as mighty men*, that are both strong in body, and bold in spirit, men of vigour, men of valour, effective men: *They of Ephraim*, as well as they of Judah, shall be *like a mighty man*, *ver. 7.* that dares go about a difficult enterprise, and is able to go through with it. They shall as mighty men tread down their enemies in the battle, as the dirt that is thrown out of the houses, is trodden with other dirt in the mire of the streets. And they shall therefore fight because the Lord is with them. Some would argue, they shall therefore sit still and do nothing, because the Lord is with them, that can and will do all: No, God's gracious presence with us to help us, must not supersede, but quicken and animate our endeavours to help ourselves; and we must therefore work out our salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that works in us both to will and to do. They shall fight with readiness and resolution, because if God be with them, they are sure to be conquerors, more than conquerors. For then the riders on horses shall be confounded. The cavalry of the enemies shall be routed and put into disorder by the infantry of the Jews. The preachers of the gospel of Christ went forth to war a good warfare, they charged bravely, because God was with them; and the riders on horses that opposed them were confounded, for God chose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty. But whence have they all this might? How come they to be so able, so active? It is in the Lord, and in the power of his might, that they are so, *ver. 6. I will strengthen the house of Judah*, and so *I will save the house of Joseph*. Note, God saves us by strengthening us, and works out our happiness by working in us to do our duty. And thus we are engaged to the utmost diligence in using the strength God gives us, and yet when all is done, God must have the glory of all. God is our strength, and so becomes both our song and our salvation.

3. Those of them that are dispersed shall be gathered together into one body, *ver. 6. I will bring them again to place them; bring them from other lands to place them in their own land*. This was a token of their being perfectly restored to all their other ancient privileges, they shall be restored to the possession of their own land. This was fulfilled, when the children of God that were scattered abroad, were by faith in Christ incorporated in the gospel church, and Jews and Gentiles became one fold, *John x. 16.* In order to this, *ver. 8. I will hiss for them*, or rather, whistle for them, as the shepherd with his pipe calls his sheep together that know his voice, and so *I will gather them*. The preaching of the gospel was as it were God's hissing for souls to come to Jesus Christ, his calling in his scattered sheep to the green pastures. *I will gather them, for I have redeemed them*. Note, Whom Christ has redeemed by his blood, God will gather by his grace, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. This promise is enlarged upon, *ver. 10. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt*. Some think this was literally fulfilled when Ptolemæus Philadelphus king of Egypt sent an hundred and twenty thousand Jews out of his country into their own land, as was the promise of gathering them out of Assyria, by Alexander the son of Antiochus Epiphanes. But it has its spiritual accomplishment in the gathering in of precious souls, out of a bondage worse than that in Egypt or Assyria, and bringing of them into the glorious liberties of the children of God, and their enjoyments, which are as the beautiful, fruitful pastures in the land of Gilead and Lebanon. All the land of promise is theirs, even Gilead, the utmost border of it eastward, and Lebanon, the utmost border northward. But how shall this be? How shall a people so dispersed be got together? How shall they that are set at such a distance from their own country, be brought to it again? It is true, the difficulties seem insuperable, but they shall be got over as easily, as effectually as those that lay in the way of their deliverance out of Egypt, and their entrance into Canaan. He shall pass through the sea with affliction, as of old through the Red-sea, to the fore affliction of Pharaoh and his hosts; or to the fore affliction of the sea, the waves whereof he shall smite, so that it shall be driven back, as when the sea saw and fled, *Psal. cxiv. 3.* And all the deeps of the river, all the rivers, though never so deep, shall dry up, as Jordan did to make way for Israel's passage into that good land which God had given them. Doth the pride of Assyria stand in the way of their deliverance? He shall give check to it that sets bounds to the proud waves of the sea, and it shall be brought down. Doth the scepter of Egypt oppose it? That shall depart away, so that it shall not be able to obstruct the gathering in of God's Israel, when his time is come for the doing of it; when the gospel church was to be gathered out of all nations by the preaching of the gospel, great opposition was given to it by the enraged, combined powers of earth and hell. Insuperable difficulties seemed to be in the way of it; but by a divine power going along with the doctrine of Christ, it became mighty to the pulling down of strong holds, and the conversion and salvation of thousands. Then the sea fled, and Jordan was driven back, at the presence of the Lord.

4. They shall greatly multiply, and the church, that new world shall be replenished. *Ver. 8. They shall increase as they have in-*

creased formerly in Egypt, and great additions shall be made to their numbers, as in the days of David and Solomon. When God gathers his redeemed ones to himself, they shall help to gather in others with them, and their motion homewards shall be like that of a snow-ball, *crescit eundo*, the farther it goes the larger it grows by accretion. *I will gather them, and they shall increase*. Note, The church of Christ is a growing body, as long as it is in the present state of minority, till it comes to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. There are added to it daily such as shall be saved. (1.) It shall spread to distant places. It shall fill Canaan, even to the lands of Gilead and Lebanon, so that no more place, no more room, shall be found for it there, *ver. 10. In Judah only God had been known*, and his name great in Israel only. Here only he revealed his statutes and judgments, but in gospel times that place shall be quite too strait; the church's tent must be enlarged, and its cords lengthened; then *I will sow them among the people*, *ver. 9.* Their scattering shall be like the scattering of seed in the ground, not to bury it, but to increase it, that it may bring forth much fruit. The Jews are said to be dispersed into every nation under heaven, *Acts ii. 5.* and as it was their troubles that dispersed some of them, so perhaps others transplanted themselves in colonies, because the land of Israel was too strait for them; and many were natives of other nations, but proselyted to the Jewish religion; now these were sown among the people, *Hos. ii. 23.* And this contributed very much to the spreading of the gospel. The Jews that came from all parts to worship at Jerusalem, fetched thence the gospel light and fire to their own countries, as those, *Acts ii.* and the eunuch, *Acts viii.* And their own synagogues in the several cities of the Gentiles, were the first receptacles of the apostles, and their preaching, wherever they came. Thus when God sowed them among the people, that they might not get hurt by the Gentiles, but do good to them, he took care that they should remember him, and make mention of his name in far countries; and by keeping up the knowledge of God among them, as he had revealed himself in the Old Testament; they would be the more ready to admire the knowledge of Christ, as he has revealed himself in the New Testament. (2.) It shall last to future ages. The church shall not be *res unius ætatis*, but a seed in it shall serve the Lord, *ver. 7. Yea, their children shall see it and be glad*; and *ver. 9. They shall live with their children, and turn again*. Converts to Christ shall have their children about them, whom they shall teach the knowledge of the Lord, and bring with them when they turn again to the holy land, and the way of holiness. It was said to those to whom the gospel was first preached, *The promise is to you and to your children*, *Acts ii. 39.* They shall be so sown among the people, as never to be extirpated: Christ's family upon earth shall never be extinct, nor his purchased possession lost for want of heirs.

5. God himself will be both their strength and their song. (1.) In him they shall be comforted, and shall have abundant satisfaction; *ver. 7. Their heart shall rejoice as through wine*, for Christ's love, which is their joy, is better than wine. They shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice. When we resolutely resist, and so overcome our spiritual enemies, then our hearts shall rejoice. But we ruin our own joy, if our resistance be feeble, and we yield to the temptations of Satan. Their heart shall rejoice, and then they shall be as a mighty man, for the joy of the Lord will be our strength. And with their graces, their joys shall be propagated. Their children shall see it and be glad, and their hearts also shall rejoice in the Lord. It is good to acquaint children betimes with the delights of religion, and to make the services of it as pleasant as may be to them; that learning betimes to rejoice in the Lord, they may with purpose of heart cleave to him. (2.) By him they shall be carried on with vigour, and enlargement of heart in his service, *ver. 12. I will strengthen them in the Lord*, strengthen them for their walk and work, as well as for their warfare. It is the God of Israel that gives strength and power unto his people, that strengthens all their powers and faculties for spiritual performances, above what they are by nature, and against what they are by the corruption of nature. Now observe, (1.) How they are thus enabled and invigorated for their duty. *I the Lord will strengthen them in the Lord*; in the Messiah, who is Jehovah our strength, as well as Jehovah our righteousness. Strength is treasured up for us in Christ, and from him it is derived to us. It is through Christ strengthening us, that we can do all things, and without him we can do nothing. His strength is commanded him for this purpose, *Psal. lxxviii. 28.* (2.) What good use they shall make of this strength given unto them. They shall walk up and down in his name. If God strengthen us, we must bestir ourselves; must walk up and down in all the duties of the Christian life, must be active and busy in the work of God, must walk up and down as industrious men do, losing no time, and letting slip no opportunity. But still we must walk up and down in the name of Christ, must do all by warrant from him, and in dependence on him, with an eye to his word as our rule, and his glory as our end. To us to live must be Christ; and whatever we do in word or deed, we must do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, that we receive not the strengthening grace of God in vain. See *Psal. lxxx. 17, 18.*

C H A P. XI.

God's prophet that in the chapters before was an ambassador sent to promise peace, is here a herald sent to proclaim war. The Jewish nation shall recover its prosperity, and shall flourish for some time, and become considerable; it shall be very happy at length in the coming of the long expected Messiah, in the preaching of his gospel, and the setting up of his standard there. But when thereby the chosen remnant among them are effectually called in, and united to Christ, the body of the nation persisting in unbelief shall be utterly abandoned, and given up to ruin for rejecting Christ; and that is it that is foretold here in this chapter; the Jews rejecting Christ, which was their measure-filling sin, and the wrath which for that sin came upon them to the uttermost. Here is, (1.) A prediction of the destruction itself that should come upon the Jewish nation, ver. 1—3. (2.) The putting of it into the hands of the Messiah. (1.) He is charged with the custody of that flock, ver. 4—6. (2.) He undertakes it, and bears rule in it, ver. 7, 8. (3.) Finding it perverse, he gives it up, ver. 9. Breaks his shepherd's staff, ver. 10, 11. Resents the indignities done him, and the contempt put upon him, ver. 12, 13. And then breaks his other staff, ver. 14. (4.) He turns them over into the hands of foolish shepherds, who instead of preventing, shall compleat their ruin, and both the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall together into the ditch, ver. 15—17. This is foretold to the poor of the flock before it comes to pass, that when it doth come to pass, they may not be offended.

1. **O** P E N thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. 2. Howl fir-tree, for the cedar is fallen, because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan, for the forest of the vintage is come down. 3. ¶ There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

In dark and figurative expressions, as is usual in the scripture predictions of things at a distance, that destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation, is here foretold, which our Lord Jesus when the time was at hand prophesied of very plainly and expressly. We have here,

1. Preparation made for that destruction, ver. 1. *Open thy doors, O Lebanon.* Thou wouldst not open them to let thy king in, he came to his own, and his own received him not; now thou must open them to let thy ruin in. Let the gates of the forest and all the avenues to it be thrown open, and let the fire come in and devour its glory. Some by Lebanon here understand the temple, which was built of cedars from Lebanon, and the stones of it white as the snow of Lebanon. It was burnt with fire by the Romans, and its gates were forced open by the fury of the soldiers. To confirm this, they tell a story, that forty years before the destruction of the second temple, the gates of it opened of their own accord; upon which prodigy, Rabbi Johanan made this remark (as it is found in one of the Jewish authors). Now I know, said he, that the destruction of the temple is at hand, according to the prophecy of Zechariah, *Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.* Others understand it of Jerusalem, or rather of the whole land of Canaan, to which Lebanon was an inlet on the north. All shall lie open to the invader, and the cedars, the mighty and eminent men, shall be devoured; which cannot but alarm those of an inferior rank, ver. 2. *If the cedars are fallen, i. e. if all the mighty are spoiled, and brought to ruin, let the fir-tree howl.* How can the slender fir-trees stand, if stately cedars fall? If cedars are devoured by fire, it is time for the fir-trees to howl; for no wood so combustible as that of the fir. And let the oaks of Bashan that lie exposed to every injury howl, for the forest of the vintage, or the flourishing vineyard, that used to be guarded with a particular care, is come down. Or, as some read it, when the defenced forests, such as Lebanon was are come down. Note, The falls of the wise and good into sin, and the falls of the rich and great into trouble, are loud alarms to those that are every way their inferiors, not to be secure.

2. Lamentation made for the destruction, ver. 3. *There is a voice of howling.* Those that are fallen, howl for grief and shame, and those who see their own turn coming, howl for fear. But the great men especially, receive the alarm with the utmost confusion. Those that were roaring in the day of their revels, and triumphs, are howling in the day of their terrors; for now they are tormented more than others. Those great men were by office shepherds, and such should have protected God's flock committed to their charge: it is the duty both of princes and priests; but they were as young lions, that made themselves a terror to the flock, with their roaring, and the flock a prey to themselves with their tearing. Note, It is sad with a people, when those that should be as shepherds to them, are as young lions to them. But what is the issue? The shepherds howl, for their glory is spoiled. Their pastures and the flocks that covered them,

which were the glory of the swains are laid waste. The young lions howl, for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. The pride of Jordan was the thickets on the banks, in which the lions reposed themselves; and therefore, when the river overflowed and spoiled them, the lions came up from them, as we read Jer. xlv. 19. and they came up roaring. Note, When those that have power, proudly abuse their power, and instead of being shepherds, are as young lions, they may expect that the righteous God will humble their pride, and break their power.

4. Thus saith the LORD my God, Feed the flock of the slaughter. 5. Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them, say, Blessed be the LORD, for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. 6. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbours hand, and into the hand of his king, and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. 7. And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock: and I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands, and I fed the flock. 8. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month, and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me. 9. Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die: and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. 10. ¶ And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. 11. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me, knew that it was the word of the LORD. 12. And I said unto them, if ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear: so they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. 13. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD. 14. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

The prophet here is made a type of Christ, as the prophet Isaiah sometimes was; and the scope of these verses is to shew, that for judgment Christ came into this world, John ix. 39. for judgment to the Jewish church and nation, which were, about the time of his coming, wretchedly corrupted and degenerated by the worldliness and hypocrisy of their rulers. Christ would have healed them, but they would not be healed, they are therefore left desolate, and abandoned to ruin. Observe here,

1. The desperate case of the Jewish church, under the tyranny of their own governors. Their slavery in their own country, made them as miserable as their captivity in strange countries had done. Their possessors slay them and sell them, ver. 5. In Zechariah's time we find the rulers and the nobles justly rebuked for exacting usury of their brethren; and the governors, even by their servants oppressive to the people, Neh. v. 7, 15. In Christ's time, the chief priests, and the elders that were the possessors of the flock by their traditions, the commandments of men, and their impositions on the consciences of the people, became perfect tyrants, devoured their houses, engrossed their wealth, and fleeced the flock instead of feeding it. The Sadducees that were deists, corrupted their judgments. The Pharisees, that were bigots for superstition, corrupted their morals, by making void the commandments of God, Mat. xv. 6. Thus they slew the sheep of the flock, thus they sold them. They mattered not what became of them, so they could but gain their own ends, and serve their own interests. And, (1.) In this they justified themselves. They slay them, and hold themselves not guilty. They think there is no harm in it, and that they shall never be called to an account for it by the chief shepherd; as if their power were given them for destruction, which was designed only for edification; and as if, because they sat in Moses's seat, they were not under the obligation of Moses's law; but might dispense with it, and with themselves in the breach of it, at their pleasure. Note, Those have their minds wofully blinded indeed, that do ill, and justify themselves in it: but God will not hold them guiltless, who hold themselves so. (2.) In this they affronted God, by giving him thanks for the gain of their oppression. They said, *blessed be the Lord, for I am rich.* As if because they prospered in their wickedness, got money by it, and raised estates, God had made himself patron of their unjust practices, and providence was become particeps criminis. What is got honestly we ought to give God thanks for, and to bless him whose blessing makes rich, and adds no sorrow with it. But with what face can we go to God, either

to beg a blessing upon the unlawful methods of getting wealth, or to return him thanks for success in them? They should rather have gone to God to confess the sin, to take shame to themselves for it, and to vow restitution, than thus to mock him, by making the gains of sin, the gift of God, who *hates robbery for burnt-offerings*; and reckons not himself praised by the thanksgiving, if he be dishonoured, either in the getting, or in the using of that which we give him thanks for. (3.) In this they put contempt upon the people of God, as unworthy their regard, or compassionate consideration; *their own shepherds pity them not*; they make them miserable, and then do not commiserate them. Christ had *compassion on the multitude, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as if they had no shepherd*, as really they had worse than none, but *their own shepherds pitied them not*, nor shewed any concern for them. Note, It is ill for a church when its pastors have no tenderness, no compassion for precious souls, when they can look upon the ignorant, the foolish, the wicked, the weak without pity.

2. The sentence of God's wrath passed upon them for their senselessness and stupidity in this condition. There was a general decay, nay, a destruction of religion among them; and it was all one to them, they regarded it not, *My people loved to have it so*, Jer. v. 31. Though they were *oppressed and broken in judgment*, yet they *willingly walked after the commandment*, Hof. v. 11. And as their shepherds pitied them not, so they did not bemoan themselves; therefore God saith, *ver. 7. I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land*. They have courted their own destruction, and so let their doom be. But those are truly miserable whom the God of mercy himself will no more have compassion upon. They that are willing to have their consciences *oppressed* by those that *teach for doctrines the commandments of men*, as the Jews were, who called them Rabbi, Rabbi, that did so, *Mat. xv. 9. —xxiii. 7.* are often punished by oppression in their civil interests, and justly, for they forfeit their own rights, who tamely give up God's rights. The Jews did so, the Papists do so; and who can pity them if they be ruled with rigour? God here threatens them, (1.) That he will deliver them into the hand of oppressors; *every one into his neighbour's hand*, so that they shall use one another barbarously. The several parties in Jerusalem did so; the zealots, the seditious, as they were called, committed greater outrages than the common enemy did; as Josephus relates in his history of the *Wars of the Jews*. They shall be delivered every one *into the hand of his king*, i. e. the Roman emperor, whom they chose to submit to, rather than to Christ, saying, *We have no king but Cæsar*. Thus they thought to ingratiate themselves with their lords and masters. But for this, God brought the Romans upon them, who *took away their place and nation*. (2.) That he will not deliver them out of their hands. *They shall smite the land, the whole land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them*; and if the Lord do not help them, none else can, nor can they help themselves.

3. A trial yet made whether their ruin might be prevented by sending Christ among them as a shepherd; God had sent his servants to them in vain, *but last of all he sent unto them his Son, saying, they will reverence my Son*; *Mat. xxi. 37.* divers of the prophets had spoken of him as the *shepherd of Israel*, *Isa. xl. 11. Ezek. xxxiv. 23.* He himself told the Pharisees that he was the *shepherd of the sheep*, and that they who pretended to be shepherds, were *thieves and robbers*, *Joh. x. 1, 2, 11.* where he seems to refer to this here. Where we have, (1.) The charge he received from his Father to try what might be done with this flock, *ver. 4. Thus saith the Lord my God, (Christ called his Father his God because he acted in compliance with his will, and with an eye to his glory in his whole undertaking) feed the flock of the slaughter*; the Jews were God's flock, but they were the *flock of slaughter*, for their enemies had killed them all the day long, and accounted them as *sheep for the slaughter*, their own possessors *slew them*, and God himself had doomed them to the slaughter; yet *feed them* by reproof, instruction, and comfort; provide wholesome food for them who have so long been soured with the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees. *Other sheep he had, which were not of this fold*, and which afterwards must be brought, but he is first sent to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, *Mat. xv. 24.* (2.) His acceptance of this charge, and his undertaking pursuant to it, *ver. 7. he doth as it were say, Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God, and since this is thy will, it is mine, I will feed the flock of slaughter*, Christ will have a care for these lost sheep; he will go about among them *teaching and healing even you, O poor of the flock*; Christ did not neglect the meanest or overlook them for their meanness; the shepherds that made a prey of them regarded not the poor, they were conversant with those only that they could get by; but Christ preached his gospel *to the poor*, *Mat. xi. 5.* It was an instance of his humiliation that his converse was mostly with the inferior sort of people; his disciples that were his constant attendants were of the *poor of the flock*. (3.) His furnishing himself tools proper for the charge he had undertaken; *I took unto me two staves*, pastoral staves, other shepherds have but one crook, but Christ had two, noting the double care he took of his flock; and what he did both for the souls and for the bodies of men. David speaks of God's *rod and his staff*, *Psal. xxiii. 4.* a correcting rod and a supporting

staff. One of these staves was called *Beauty*, noting the temple which is called the *beauty of holiness*, and one of its gates, *beautiful*; which Christ called his Father's house and for which he shewed a great zeal when he cleared it of the *buyers and sellers*; the other he called *Bands*, noting their civil state, and the incorporate society of that nation, which Christ also took care of by preaching love and peace among them: Christ in his gospel, and in all he did among them consulted the advancement both of their civil, and of their sacred interests. (4.) His execution of his office as the chief shepherd, *he fed the flock*, *ver. 7.* and he displaced those under shepherds that were false to their trust, *ver. 8. Three shepherds I cut off in one month*. Through the deficiency and uncertainty of the history of the Jewish church in its latter ages, we know not what particular event this had its accomplishment in; in general, it seems to be an act of power and justice for the punishment of the *sinful shepherds*, and the redress of the grievances of the *abused flock*. Some understand it of the three orders of princes, priests, and Scribes or prophets, who when Christ had finished his work were laid aside for their unfaithfulness. Others of the three sects among the Jews of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, all whom Christ silenced in dispute, *Mat. xxii.* and soon after *cut them off*, all in a little time.

4. Their enmity to Christ, and making themselves odious to him. He came to his own, the sheep of his own pasture; it might have been expected that between them and him there should have been an entire affection, as between the shepherd and his sheep, but they carried themselves so ill that *his soul loathed them*, was *strained* towards them, so it may be read; he intended them kindness but could not do them the kindness he intended them, *because of their unbelief*, *Mat. xiii. 58.* He was disappointed in them, discouraged concerning them, *grieved* for them; not only for the shepherds he cut off, but for the people, whom Christ often looked upon with grief in his heart and tears in his eyes. Their provocations even wore out his patience, and he was weary of that *faithless and perverse generation*. *Their soul also it abhorred me*, and therefore it was that his soul loathed them, for whatever estrangement there is between God and man, it begins on man's side. The Jewish shepherds rejected this chief shepherd, as the Jewish builders rejected this chief corner stone. They *had indignation* at Christ's doctrine and miracles, and his interest in the people; to whom they did all they could to make him odious as they had made themselves odious to him. Note, There is a mutual enmity between God and wicked people; they are hateful to God and haters of God; nothing speaks more the sinfulness and misery of an unregenerate state than this doth; the carnal mind, the friendship of the world are enmity to God, and God hateth all the workers of iniquity; and it is easy to foresee what this will end in, if the quarrel be not taken up in time, *Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.*

5. Christ's rejecting of them as incurable, and leaving them their house desolate, *Mat. xxiii. 38.* The things of their peace are now hid from their eyes, because they knew not the day of their visitation. Here we have,

1. The sentence of their rejection past, *ver. 9. Then said I, I will not feed you, I will take no further care of you, you shall not see me again*; take your own course. As I will not feed you, so I will not cure you; *that that dieth, let it die*; the shepherd will do nothing to save its forfeited life; *that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off*; that that will make it self a prey to the wolf, let it be a prey; and let the rest so far forget their own mild and gentle nature, as to *eat the flesh one of another*; let these sheep fight like dogs, those that reject Christ will be certainly and justly rejected by him, and then are miserable of course.

2. A sign of it given, *ver. 10. I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it in sunder*, in token of this, that he would be no longer a shepherd to them; as the lord high-steward determines his commission by breaking his white staff, and as Moses's breaking the tables of the law, put a stop for the present to the treaty between God and Israel, the breaking of this staff signified the breaking of God's covenant which he had made with all the people; the covenant of peculiarity made with all the tribes of Israel, and all other people that by being profelyted to their religion were incorporated into their nation. The Jewish church was now stripped of all its glory, its crown is profaned and cast to the ground, and all its honour laid in the dust, for God is departed from it, and will no more own it for his; when Christ told them plainly that the *kingdom of God should be taken from them and given to another people*, then he broke the *staff of Beauty*, *Mat. xxi. 43.* And it was broken in that day, though Jerusalem and the Jewish nation held up forty years longer, yet from that day we may reckon the staff of Beauty broken, *ver. 11.* And though the great men did not, or would not, understand it as a divine sentence, but thought to put it by with a cold *God forbid*, *Luke xx. 16.* yet the *poor of the flock* the disciples of Christ that waited on him, and understood with what authority he spoke, and could distinguish the voice of their shepherd from that of a stranger, they knew that it was the word of the Lord, and trembled at it, and were confident that it should not fall to the ground. Note, Christ is waited on by the *poor of the flock*; he chose them to be with him, to be his pupils, to be his witnesses; the *poor received him and his gospel*, when those that had *great possessions* turned their

their backs upon him. And those that *wait upon Christ*, that sit at his feet to hear and receive his words, they shall *know of the doctrine whether it be of God*, John vii. 17.

3. A further reason given for their rejection. It was said before, their souls abhorred him; and here we have an instance of it, their buying and selling him for thirty pieces of silver; either thirty Roman pence, or rather thirty Jewish shekels; this is here foretold in somewhat obscure expressions; as it is fit such particular prophecies should be delivered, lest otherwise the plainness of the prophecy might prevent the accomplishment of it. Here, (1.) The shepherd comes to them for his wages, *ver. 12. If ye think good, give me my price; you are weary of me, pay me off and discharge me; and if not, forbear; if you be willing to continue me longer in your service, I will continue; or if to turn me off without wages, I am content.* Christ was no *hireling*, and yet the labourer is worthy of his hire. Compare with this what Christ said to Judas, when he was going to sell him, *what thou doest, do quickly*; be at a word with the chief-priests, let them either take the bargain or leave it, *John xiii. 27.* Those that betray Christ are not forced to it, they might have chosen. (2.) They value him at *thirty pieces of silver*; many years service he had done them as a shepherd, yet this is all they will now turn him off with, *a goodly price that I and all my care and pains was valued at by them.* If Judas fixed this sum in his demand, it is observable that his name is Judah, the same name with that of the body of the people, for it was a national act; or, if (as it rather seems) the chief-priests pitched upon this sum in their profers, they were the representatives of the people; it was part of the priests office to *put a value upon the devoted things*, Lev. xxvii. 8. and thus they valued the Lord Jesus. It was the ordinary price of a slave, *Exod. xxi. 32.* Making light of Christ and undervaluing the love of that great and good shepherd, is the ruin of multitudes and justly so. (3.) The silver being no way proportionable to his worth, it is *thrown to the potter* with disdain; let him take it to buy clay with, or for any use that a little money will serve to; for it is not worth hoarding; it may be enough for a potter's stock, but not for the pay of such a shepherd, much less for his purchase. So the prophet *cast the thirty pieces of silver to the potter in the house of the Lord*; let him take them, and do what he will with them. Now we find a particular accomplishment of this in the history of Christ's sufferings, and reference is had to this prophecy, *Mat. xxvii. 9, 10. Thirty pieces of silver* was the very sum for which Christ was sold to the chief priests; the money when Judas would not keep it, and the chief priests would not take it back, was laid out in the purchase of *the potter's field*. Even that sudden resolve of the chief-priests was according to an ancient prophecy, and the more ancient counsel and fore-knowledge of God.

4. The completing of their rejection in the cutting asunder of the other staff, *ver. 14.* The former spoke the ruin of *their church* by breaking the covenant between God and them, that defaced their *beauty*; this speaks the ruin of *their state*, by breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel, *i. e.* by reviving animosities, and contention among them such as were of old between Judah and Israel, the writing of whom as *one stick in the hand of the Lord* was one of the blessings promised after their return out of captivity, *Ezek. xxxvii. 19.* But that union shall now be dissolved, they shall be crumbled into parties and factions, exasperated one against another; and their kingdom being thus *divided* shall be *brought to desolation*. (1.) Nothing ruins a people so certainly, so inevitably, as the breaking of *the staff of Bands*, and the weakening of the brotherhood among them; for hereby they become an easy prey to the common enemy. (2.) This follows upon the dissolving of the covenant between God and them, and the decay of religion among them; when iniquity abounds love waxeth cold. No wonder if those fall out among themselves that have provoked God, to fall out with them. When the staff of Beauty is broke, the staff of Bands will not hold long. An unchurched people will soon be an undone people.

15. ¶ And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. 16. For lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, *which* shall not visit *those that be cut off*, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal *that that is broken*, nor feed *that that standeth still*: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. 17. Wo to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock: the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

God having shewed the misery of this people in their being justly *abandoned* by the good shepherd, here shews their further misery in being *shamefully abused* by foolish shepherds. The prophet is himself to personate and represent this pretended shepherd, *ver. 15. Take unto thee the instruments, or accoutrements, of a foolish shepherd*, that are no way fit for the business; such a shepherd's coat, and bag, and staff, as a *foolish shepherd* would appear in; for such a shepherd shall be set over them (*ver. 16.*)

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that instead of protecting them, shall oppress them, and do them mischief. (1.) They shall be under the inspection of unfaithful ministers; their scribes, and priests, and doctors of their law, shall bind heavy burthens upon them, and grievous to be born; and with their traditions imposed, shall make the ceremonial law much more a yoke than God had made it. The description here given of the foolish shepherd suits very well with the character Christ gives of the Scribes and Pharisees, *Mat. xxiii.* (2.) They shall be under the tyranny of unmerciful princes that shall rule them with rigour, and make their own land as much a house of bondage to them as ever Egypt or Babylon were; when they had rejected him by *whom princes decree justice*, it was just they should be turned over to them who *decree unrighteous decrees*. (3.) They shall be imposed upon and deluded by false christs and false prophets, as our Saviour foretold, *Mat. xxiv. 5.* Many such there were, who by their seditious practices provoked the Romans, and hastened the ruin of the Jewish nation; but it is observable they were never cheated by a counterfeit Messiah, till they had refused and rejected the true Messiah. Now observe,

1. What a curse this foolish shepherd should be to the people, *ver. 16.* God will for their punishment *raise up a foolish shepherd*, who will not do the duty of a shepherd; he will not *visit those that be cut off*, nor go after those that go astray, or seek those that are missing, to find them out and bring them home, as the good shepherd doth, *Mat. xviii. 12, 13.* They take no care of the *young ones*, that need their care, and are well worthy of it, as Christ doth, *Isa. xl. 11.* They do not *heal that which was broken*, which was worried and torn, but let it die of its bruises, when a little thing in time would have saved it. They do not *feed* those that through weakness stand still, and are ready to faint and cannot get forward, but leave them behind, let who will take them up; they do not *carry that which stands still*; so some read, never do any thing to *support the weak*, and comfort the *feeble minded*; but, on the contrary, (1.) They are *luxurious* themselves, they *eat of the flesh of the fat*, they will have of the best for themselves; and like that *wicked servant* that said, *My lord delays his coming*, they *eat and drink with the drunken*, and *serve their own bellies*. (2.) They are barbarous to the flock, their passions are as ill governed as their appetites, for when they are in a rage against any of the flock, they *tear their very claws in pieces*, by over driving them, they beat their hoofs; they *smite their fellow servants*; *wo unto thee, O land, when thy king is such a child.*

2. What a curse this foolish shepherd should bring upon himself, *ver. 17.* *Wo to the idol shepherd* that like an idol has eyes and sees not; that like an idol receives abundance of respect and homage from the people, and the chiefest of their offerings, but neither can nor will do them any kindness. He *leaves the flock* when they most need his care, leaves them destitute, and flees *because he is a hireling*, his doom is that the sword of God's justice shall be upon his arm and his right eye, so that he shall quite lose the use of both. His arm shall *wither* and be *dried up*; so that he who would not help his friends when it was required, shall not know how to help himself; *his right eye shall be utterly darkened*, that he shall not discern the danger that his flock is in, nor know which way to look for relief. This was fulfilled when Christ said to the Pharisees, *I am come that they which see may be made blind*, John ix. 39. Those that have gifts which qualify them to do good, if they do not do good with them, they shall be taken away from them; those that should have been *workmen* but were *sllothful* and would do nothing, will justly have their arm dried up; and that should have been *watchmen*, but were *sleepy*, and would never look about them, will justly have their eye blinded.

C H A P. XII.

The apostle, Gal. iv. 25, 26. *distinguisheth between Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children, the remaining carcase of the Jewish church that rejected Christ; and Jerusalem that is from above, that is free, and is the mother of us all; the Christian church, the spiritual Jerusalem, which God has chosen to put his name there; in the chapter before we read the doom of the former, and left that carcase to be a prey to the eagles that should be gathered to it. Now in this chapter we have the blessings of the latter, many precious promises made to the gospel Jerusalem by him who, ver. 1. declares his power to make them good. It is promised, (1.) That the attempts of the church's enemies against her, shall be to their own ruin, and they shall find it is at their peril if they do her any hurt, ver. 2, 3, 4, 6. (2.) That the endeavours of the church's friends and patrons for her good shall be pious, regular, and successful, ver. 5. (3.) That God will protect and strengthen the meanest and weakest that belong to his church, and work salvation for them, ver. 7, 8. (4.) That as a preparative for all this mercy and a pledge of it, he will pour upon them a spirit of prayer and repentance, the products of which shall be universal and very particular, ver. 9—14. These promises were of use then, to the pious Jews that lived in the*

troublesome times under Antiochus and other persecutors and oppressors, and they are still to be improved in every age for the directing of our prayers, and the encouraging of our hopes with reference to the gospel church.

1. **T**HE burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. 2. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah, and against Jerusalem. 3. ¶ And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. 4. In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness, and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. 5. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. 6. ¶ In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. 7. The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, do not magnify themselves against Judah. 8. In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.

Here is, 1. The title of this charter of promises made to God's Israel; it is the *burthen of the word of the Lord*, a divine prediction; it is of weight, in the delivery of it; it is to be pressed upon people, and will be very pressing in the accomplishment of it; it is a *burthen*, a heavy burthen, to all the church's enemies, like that *talent of lead*, chap. v. 7, 8. But it is *for Israel*; it is for their comfort and benefit. As even the *fiery law*, (Deut. xxxiii. 2.) so the fiery prophecies and fiery providences that come from God's right-hand, come *for them*; the word that speaks terror to their enemies, speaks peace to them; as the pillar of cloud and fire which turned a bright side towards the Israelites to direct and encourage them, but a black side towards the Egyptians to terrify and dispirit them. Happy they that have even the *burthens of God's word for them*, as well as the blessings of it.

2. The title of him that grants this charter, which is prefixed to it, to shew that he hath both authority to make these promises, and ability to make them good, for he is the creator of the world, and our Creator; and therefore has an incontestable, irresistible dominion. (1.) He *stretcheth out the heavens*; not only he *did so* at the first, when he said, *Let there be a firmament*, and he *made the firmament*, but he *doth so* still, he keeps them stretched out like a curtain, keeps them from running in, and will do so till the end comes, when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. No bounds can be set to his power that stretcheth out the heavens, nor can any thing be too hard for him. (2.) He *layeth the foundation of the earth*, and keeps it firm and fixed on its own basis, or rather on its own axis, tho' it is *founded on the seas*, Psal. xxiv. 1, 7. nay, tho' it is *hung upon nothing*, Job xxvi. 7. The founder of this earth is no doubt the ruler of it, and judgeth in it, and they deceive themselves who say, *The Lord has forsaken the earth*, for if he had, it would have sunk, since it is he that not only *did* lay its foundations at first, but *doth* still lay them, still uphold them. (3.) He *formeth the spirit of man within him*, i. e. He *made us these souls*, Jer. xxxviii. 16. He not only breathed into the first man, but still breathes into every man the breath of life, the body is derived from the *fathers of our flesh*, but the soul is infused by the *Father of spirits*, Heb. xii. 9. He *fashioneth mens hearts*; they are in his hand, and he turns them as the rivers of water, and casts them into what mold he pleaseth, so as to serve his own purposes with them; and can therefore save his church by enspiriting his friends, and dispiriting his enemies, and will eternally save all his chosen by *forming their spirits* anew.

3. The promises themselves that are here made them, by which the church shall be secured, and in which all its friends may enjoy a holy security.

1. It is promised that whatever attacks the enemies of the church may make upon her purity or peace, they will certainly issue in their own confusion. The enemies of God and of his kingdom bear a great deal of malice and ill-will to Jerusalem,

and form designs for its destruction, but it will prove at last that they are but preparing ruin for themselves; Jerusalem is in safety, and they are in all the danger that fight against it. This is here illustrated by three comparisons.

(1.) Jerusalem shall be a *cup of trembling* to all that lay siege to it, ver. 2. They promise themselves that it shall be to them a cup of wine, which they shall easily and with pleasure drink off, and they thirst for its spoils, nay, they thirst for its blood, as for such a cup, but it shall prove a *cup of slumber*, nay a *cup of poison* to them, which when they take into their hands, and think it is all their own, they shall not be able to drink off, the fumes of it shall give them enough. When the kings were assembled against her, and saw how God was known in her palaces for a refuge, they trembled and hasted away, fear took hold upon them, as we find, Psal. xlviii. 3, 4, 5, 6. Thus Alexander the Great was struck with amazement when he met Jaddus the high-priest, and was deterred thereby from offering any violence to Jerusalem. When Sennacherib laid siege against Judah and Jerusalem, he found them such a cup of stupifying wine as laid all his mighty men asleep, Psal. lxxvi. 5, 6. Some read it, I will make Jerusalem a *post of contrition*, or *breaking*: they that make any attempts upon Jerusalem, do but run their heads against a post, which they cannot move, but are sure to hurt themselves. The blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall, Isa. xxv. 4. broken by it, but not shaking it. God's church is a cup of consolation to all her friends, Isa. lxvi. 11. but a cup of trembling to all that would either debauch her by errors and corruptions, or destroy her by wars and persecutions. See Isa. li. 22, 23.

(2.) Jerusalem shall be a *burdensome stone* to all that attempt to remove it or carry it away, ver. 3. All the people of the earth are here supposed to be gathered together against it; some one time and some another; there has been a succession of enemies, from age to age, making war upon the church; nay, tho' they were all at once in a confederacy against it, and had formed a resolution to cut off the name of Israel, that it should be no more in remembrance, Psal. lxxxiii. 4. They will find it a task too hard for them; they that are for keeping up and advancing the kingdom of sin in the world, look upon Jerusalem, even the church of God, as the great obstacle to their designs, and they must have it out of the way; but they will find it heavier than they think it is; so that, (1.) They cannot remove it; God will have a church in the world in spite of them; it is *built upon a rock*, and is as *mount Zion that abideth for ever*, Psal. cxxv. 1. This stone cut out of the mountain without hands, will not only keep its ground, but fill the earth, Dan. ii. 35. Nay, (2.) It will break in pieces all that burden themselves with it, as that stone smote the image, Dan. ii. 45. All that think themselves a match for it shall be cut in pieces by it. Some think it is an allusion to a sport, which, Jerom upon this place saith, was in use among the Jews, as among us: young men tried their strength, and strove for mastery, by heaving up great stones, which if they proved too heavy for them, fell upon them and bruised them. Those that make a jest of religion, and banter sacred things, will find them a *burdensome stone*, that it is ill jesting with edge-tools, and tho' they make light of it, saying, *Am not I in sport?* they bring upon themselves an insupportable sinking load of guilt. Our Saviour seems to allude to these words when he speaks of himself as a *burdensome stone*, to those that would not have him for their foundation-stone, which shall fall upon them, and grind them to powder, Mat. xxi. 44.

(3.) The governors of Judah shall be among their enemies like a *hearth of fire among the wood*, and a *torch of fire in a sheaf*, ver. 6. Not that their own passions shall make them incendiaries, and firebrands to all about them, no, Zion's king is meek and lowly, and all subordinate governors must be like him; but God's justice will make them avengers of his cause, and theirs upon their enemies. They that contend with them will find it is like an opposition given by briars and thorns to a consuming fire, Isa. xxvii. 4. It will go thro' them, and burn them together. It is God's wrath, and not theirs that is the fire which devours the adversaries. God's fire is said to be in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem, Isa. xxxi. 9. The enemies thought to be as water to this fire, to extinguish it, and put it quite out, but God will make them as wood, nay, as a sheaf of corn, which is more combustible to this fire, not only to be consumed by it, but to be made thereby to burn the more strongly. When God would make Abimelech and the men of Shechem one another's destroyers; fire is said to come out from the one to devour the other, Judg. ix. 20. So here, fire shall come out from the governors of Judah, to devour all the people round about, as from the mouth of God's witnesses, to consume those who offer to hurt them, Rev. xi. 5. The persecutors of the primitive church found this fulfilled in it, witness Lactantius's history of God's judgments upon the primitive persecutors, and the confession of Julian the apostate at last, *Thou hast overcome me, O thou Galilean*; the church's motto may be, *Nemo me impune lacessit*. If you are weary of your life, persecute the Christians, was once a proverb.

2. It is promised that God will infatuate the counsels and enfeeble the courage of the church's enemies, ver. 4. In that day when the people of the earth are gathered together against Jerusalem, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with

with madness; and again, *I will smite every horse of the people with blindness*, so that they shall be no way serviceable to them; blinding the horses will be as bad as houghing them. The horses and their horsemen shall both forget the military exercise to which they were trained, and instead of keeping ranks and observing the rules of their discipline, they shall both grow mad and ruin themselves. The church's infantry shall be quite too hard for the enemy's cavalry; and those that are upbraided with trusting in horses shall be baffled by those who were forbidden to multiply horses.

3. It is promised that Jerusalem shall be re-peopled, and replenished, *ver. 6. Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.* The natives of Jerusalem shall not incorporate in a colony in some other country, and build a city there, and call that Jerusalem, and see the promises fulfilled in that, as those in New-England called their towns by the names of towns in Old-England; no, they shall have a new Jerusalem upon the same foundation, the same spot of ground with the old one. They had so after their return out of captivity, but this was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, which is a Jerusalem inhabited in its own place, for the gospel being to be preached to all the world, it may call every place its own.

4. It is promised that the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be enabled to defend themselves, and yet shall be taken under the divine protection, *ver. 8.* See here in what method God preserves his church, and those that are his from the gates of hell, to, and through the gates of heaven. (1.) He doth himself secure them; *In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* Not only Jerusalem itself from being taken and destroyed, but every inhabitant of it from being any way damaged. God will not only be a wall of fire about the city to fortify that, but he will compass particular persons with his favour as with a shield, so that no dart of the besiegers shall touch them. (2.) He doth it by giving them strength and courage to help themselves; what God works in his people by his grace, contributes more to their preservation and defence, than what he works for them by his providence. *The God of Israel gives strength and power to his people*, that they may do their part, and then he will not be wanting to do his. It is the glory of God to strengthen the weak that most need his help, to see and own their need of it, and will be the most thankful for it. (1.) In that day the feeblest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as David; shall be men of war as bold and brave, as skilful and strong as David himself; shall enterprize and accomplish great things as David did, and become as serviceable to Jerusalem in guarding it, as David himself was in founding it, and as formidable as he was to the enemies of it. See what divine grace doth, it makes children not only men but champions; makes weak saints to be not only good soldiers but great soldiers, like David. And see how God often doth his own work as easily, and effectually, and more to his own glory, by weak and obscure instruments than by the most illustrious. (2.) *The house of David shall be as God, i. e. as the angel of the Lord before him.* Zerubbabel was now the top-branch of the house of David, he shall be endued with wisdom and grace for the service to which he is called; and shall go before the people as an angel; as that angel (so some think) which went before the people of Israel through the wilderness, who was God himself, *Exod. xxiii. 20.* God will increase the gifts and abilities both of the people and princes, in proportion to the respective services for which they are designed. It was said of David that he was as an angel of God to discern good and bad, *2 Sam. xiv. 17.* Such shall now the house of David be. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as strong and fit for action as nature made David, and their magistrates as wise and fit for counsel as grace made him. But this was to have its full accomplishment in Christ; now the house of David looked little and mean, and its glory was eclipsed, but in Christ the house of David shone more bright than ever, and its countenance was as that of an angel; in him it became more blessed, and more a blessing than ever it had been.

5. It is promised that there shall be a very good understanding between the city and the country, and the balance shall be kept even between them; there shall be no mutual envies or jealousies between them; they shall not keep up any separate interests, but shall heartily unite in their counsels, and act in concert for the common good; and this happy agreement between the city and the country, the head and the body, is very necessary to the health, welfare, and safety of any nation.

1. The governors of Judah, the magistrates and gentry of the country shall think honourably of the citizens, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the merchants and tradesmen, they shall not run them down, and contrive how to keep them under, but they shall say in their hearts, not in compliment, but in sincerity, *The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength*, the strength of my country, of my family in the Lord of hosts their God, *ver. 5.* They will therefore upon all occasions pay respect and deference to Jerusalem, as the mother-city, the ruling-city, and the city that is to be first served, because they look upon it to be the bulwark of the nation; and its strongest fortification in times of publick danger and distress; which therefore they would all come in to the assistance of, and come under the protection of; and this not so much because it was a rich city, and money is the sinews of

war, or because it was a populous city, and could bring the greatest numbers into the field, or because its inhabitants were generally the most ingenious, active men, the best soldiers, and the best commanders; *Of Zion it shall be said that this and that brave man was born there*; but because it was a holy city; where God's house and household, the temple and the priests, were, where his worship was kept up, and his feasts observed: and because it should now be more than ever a praying city, for upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem God will pour a spirit of supplication, *ver. 10.* therefore the governors of Judah shall say, *these are my strength*; they are so upon the account of their relation to their interest in, and their communion with, the Lord of hosts their God. Because the Lord of hosts is in a particular manner their God, for in Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion, therefore they shall be my strength. Note, It is well with a kingdom when its great men know how to value its good men; when its governors look upon religion and religious people to be their strength, and that it is their interest to support them, and learn to call godly praying people and skilful faithful ministers, the chariots and horsemen of Israel, as Joash called Elisha, and not the troublers of the land, as Ahab called Elijah.

2. The court and the city shall not despise or look with contempt upon the inhabitants of the country, no, not the meanest of them, much less upon the governors of Judah. For God will put signal honour upon Judah, and so save them from the contempt of their brethren. As Jerusalem was dignified by special ordinances, so Judah shall be dignified with special providences; God saith, *ver. 4. I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah*; upon the poor country people; proud men scornfully overlook them, but the great God will graciously look upon them, and look after them. Nay, *ver. 7. The Lord shall save the tents of Judah first.* They that dwell in tents lie most exposed, but God will remarkably protect and deliver them, before those that dwell in Jerusalem. He will appear glorious in what he doth for the inhabitants of his villages in Israel, *Judg. v. 11.* Thus in the mystical body, God gives more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there may be no schism in the body, see *1 Cor. xii. 22—25.* which is the reason here given, that the glory of the house of David that have great power, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem that have great wealth, and both which live in great pomp and pleasure, may not magnify themselves against Judah, and the tents of Judah, the dwellers in which work hard and fare hard, and perhaps are not so well bred. Note, Courtiers and citizens ought not to despise country people, or look with disdain upon those whom God opens his eyes upon, and who are first saved; while it is so hard for the rich and great to enter the kingdom of God. If God by his grace has magnified the dwellers in the tents of Judah, having chosen the weak and foolish things of the world, and chosen to employ them, we affront him if we vilify them, or magnify ourselves against them, *Jam. ii. 5, 6.* This promise has a further reference to the gospel-church, in which no difference shall be made between high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, circumcision and uncircumcision, but all shall be alike welcome to Christ, and partake of his benefits, *Col. iii. 11.* Jerusalem shall not then be thought, as it had been, more holy than other parts of the land of Israel.

9. ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 10. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. 11. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. 12. And the land shall mourn, every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart: the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart: 13. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart: the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart: 14. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

The day here spoken of, is the day of Jerusalem's defence and deliverance, that glorious day when God will appear for the salvation of his people; which if it do refer to the successes which the Jews had against their enemies in the time of the Maccabees, yet certainly it looks further to the gospel-day; to Christ's victories over the powers of darkness, and the great salvation he has wrought for his chosen. Now we have here an account of two remarkable works designed in that day.

1. A glorious work of God to be wrought for his people, *I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem, ver. 9.* Nations came against Jerusalem, many and mighty nations, but they

they shall *all* be *destroyed*, their power shall be broken, and their attempts baffled; the mischief they intend shall return upon their own head. God will *seek to destroy* them; not as if he were at a loss for ways and means to bring it about; infinite wisdom was never *nonplussed*, but his *seeking to do it*, intimates that he is very earnest and intent upon it: he is jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and has the *day of vengeance* in his heart; and that he over-rules means and instruments, and all the motions and operations of second causes, in order to it. He is *framing evil* against them; when he *seems* to be setting them up, he is *seeking* to destroy them. In Christ's first coming he *fought to destroy* him that had the power of death, and did destroy him, bruised the serpent's head, and broke all the *powers of darkness* that fought against God's kingdom among men, and the faithful friends and subjects of that kingdom; *spoiled* them, and *made a shew of them openly*: In his second coming he will complete their destruction, when he shall *put down all opposing rule, principality and power*, and *death* it self shall be *swallowed up* in that victory; the *last enemy* that shall be *destroyed* of all that fought against *Jerusalem*.

2. A *gracious work* of God to be wrought in his people, in order to the work that is to be wrought for them. When he *seeks to destroy* their enemies, he will *pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication*. Note, When God intends great mercy for his people, the first thing he doth is to set them a praying; thus he *seeks to destroy* their enemies by stirring them up to seek to him that he would do it for them; because tho' he has purposed it, and promised it, and it is for his own glory to do it, yet he will *for this be enquired of by the house of Israel*, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Ask and it shall be given; this honour will he have to himself, and this honour will he put upon prayer, and upon praying people. And it is a happy preface to the distressed church, of deliverance approaching, and is, as it were, the dawning of its day, when his people are stirred up to cry mightily to him for it.

But this promise has reference to, and is performed in the graces of the Spirit given to all believers, as that, *Isa. xlv. 3. I will pour my spirit upon thy seed*, which was fulfilled when *Jesus was glorified*, John vii. 39. It is a promise of the Spirit, and with him of all *spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ*. Now observe here,

1. On whom these blessings are poured out; (1.) On the *house of David*, on the great men, for they are no more, and no better, than the grace of God makes them. It was promised, *ver. 8. that the house of David shall be as the angel of the Lord*. Now in order to that, the Spirit of grace is poured upon them; for the more the saints have of the Spirit of grace, the more like they are to the holy angels. When God was about to appear for the *land*, he poured his Spirit of grace upon the *house of David*, the leading men of the land; it bodes well to a people when they go before the rest in that which is good, as *2 Chron. xx. 5*. The house of David is all summed up in Jesus Christ, the *Son of David*, and upon him, as the head, the Spirit of grace is poured out, from him to be diffused to all his members; *from his fulness we receive, and grace for grace*. (2.) On the *inhabitants of Jerusalem*, the common people; for the operations of the Spirit are the same upon the mean and weak Christians, that they are upon the strong and more grown. The inhabitants of Jerusalem cannot influence publick affairs by their powers and policies, so as the great men of the house of David may, yet they may do good service by their prayers, and therefore upon them the Spirit shall be poured out. The church is Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem, all true believers that have their conversation in heaven are inhabitants of this Jerusalem, and to them this promise belongs, *God will pour his Spirit upon them*. This is that earnest which all that *believe in Christ shall receive*; thus are they sanctified, thus are they sealed.

2. What these blessings are. *I will pour upon them the Spirit*. That includes all good things, as it qualifies us for the favour of God, and all his other gifts. He will pour out the Spirit, (1.) As a *Spirit of grace*, to sanctify us, and to make us gracious. (2.) As a *Spirit of supplications*, inclining us to, instructing and assisting us in, the duty of prayer. Note, Wherever the Spirit is given as a Spirit of grace, he is given as a Spirit of sanctification. Wherever he is a Spirit of adoption, he *teacheth to cry, Abba, Father*. As soon as ever Paul was converted, *Behold, he prays*, Acts ix. 11. You may as soon find a living man without breath, as a living saint without prayer. There is a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of prayer now under the gospel than was under the law; and the further the work of sanctification is carried in us, the better is the work of supplication carried on by us.

3. What the effect of them will be. *I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace*, one would think it should follow, and they shall look on him whom they have believed, and shall rejoice, and it is true that that is one of the fruits of the pouring out of the Spirit, whence we read of the joy of the Holy Ghost, but it follows *they shall mourn*, for there is a holy mourning, that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit; a mourning for sin which is of use to quicken faith in Christ, and qualify for joy in God. It is here made the matter of a *promise* that they shall *mourn*, for there is a *mourning* that will end in rejoicing, and hath a

blessing entailed upon it. This *mourning* is a fruit of the *Spirit of grace*, an evidence of a work of grace in the soul; and a companion of the Spirit of supplication, as it expresseth lively affections working in prayer; hence *prayers and tears* are often put together, *2 Kings xx. 5*. Jacob, that wrestler with God, *wept and made supplication*. But here it is a *mourning for sin*, that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit.

1. It is a mourning grounded upon a sight of Christ; *they shall look on me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him*. Here, (1.) It is foretold that Christ should be *pierced*, and this scripture is quoted as that which was fulfilled when Christ's side was *pierced* upon the cross; see *John xix. 37*. (2.) He is spoken of as one whom *we have pierced*; it is spoken primarily of the Jews, who persecuted him to the death; and we find that *they who pierced him* are distinguished from the other *kindreds of the earth*, that shall *wail because of him*, Rev. i. 7. yet it is true of us all as sinners, we have *pierced Christ*; inasmuch as our sins were the *cause of his death*, for he was *wounded for our transgressions*, and they are the *grief of his soul*; he is *broken with the whorish heart* of sinners, who therefore are said to *crucify him afresh*, and put him to open shame. (3.) Those that truly repent of sin, look upon Christ as one whom *they have pierced*; who was *pierced for their sins*, and is pierced by them, and this engageth them to *look unto him*, as those that are deeply concerned for him. (4.) This is the effect of their looking to Christ, it makes them mourn. This was particularly fulfilled in those to whom Peter preached Christ crucified, when they heard it, they who had had a hand in piercing him were *pricked to the heart*, and cried out, *What shall we do?* It is fulfilled in all those who sorrow for sin after a godly sort; they look to Christ and *mourn for him*, not so much for his sufferings, as for their own sins that procured them. Note, The genuine sorrows of a *penitent soul*, flow from the believing sight of a *pierced Saviour*. Looking by faith upon the cross of Christ, will set us a mourning for sin after a godly sort.

2. It is a great mourning, (1.) It is like the mourning of a parent for the death of a beloved child. They shall mourn for sin as one *mourneth for an only son*, in whose grave the hopes of his family are buried, and shall be inwardly *in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born*, as the Egyptians were when there was a cry throughout all the land, for the death of their first-born. The sorrow of children for the death of their parents is sometimes counterfeited, is often small, and soon wears off, and is forgotten; but the sorrow of parents for a child, for a son, for an only son, for a first-born, is natural, sincere, unforced, and unaffected, it is secret and lasting; such are the sorrows of a true penitent, flowing purely from love to Christ above any other. (2.) It is like the mourning of a people for the death of a wife and good prince. It shall be *like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon*, where good king Josiah was slain, for whom there was a general lamentation, *ver. 11*. and perhaps the greater because they were told, it was their sin that provoked God to deprive them of so great a blessing, therefore they cried out, *The crown is fallen from our head, Wo unto us, for we have sinned*, Lam. v. 16. Christ is our king; our sins were his death, and for that reason ought to be our grief.

3. It is a general, universal mourning, *ver. 12. The land shall mourn*. The land it self put on mourning at the death of Christ, for there was then *darkness over all the land*, and the earth trembled; but this is a promise, that, in consideration of the death of Christ, multitudes shall be effectually brought to sorrow for sin, and turn to God; it shall be such an universal gracious mourning as was when *all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord*, 1 Sam. vii. 2. Some think this is yet to have its complete accomplishment in the general conversion of the Jewish nation.

4. It is also a private, particular mourning. There shall be not only a mourning of the *land*, by its representatives in a general assembly, as *Judg. ii. 5*. when the place was called Bochim, a place of *weepers*, but it shall spread it self into all corners of the land. *Every family apart shall mourn*, *ver. 12. All the families that remain*, *ver. 14*. All have contributed to the guilt, and therefore all shall share in the grief. Note, The exercises of devotion should be performed by private families among themselves, besides their joining in publick assemblies for religious worship. National fasts must be observed not only in our synagogues, but in our houses. In the mourning here foretold, the *wives mourn apart* by themselves, in their own apartment, as *Esther and her maids*. And some think it intimates their denying themselves the use even of lawful delights in a time of general humiliation, 1 Cor. vii. 5.

Four several families are here instanced in, as examples to others in this mourning. (1.) Two of them are *royal families*; the *house of David*, in Solomon, and the *house of Nathan* another son of David, brother to Solomon, from whom Zerubbabel descended, as appears by Christ's genealogy, *Luke iii. 27, 31*. The house of David, particularly that of Nathan, which is now the chief branch of that house, shall go before in this good work; the greatest princes must not think themselves exempted from the law of repentance, but rather obliged most solemnly to express it, for the exciting of others; as Hezekiah humbled himself, *2 Chron. xxxii. 26*. The princes and the king, *2 Chron. xii. 6*. and the king

king of Nineveh, *Jonah* iii. 6. (2.) Two of them are *sacred families*, ver. 13. *The family of the house of Levi* which was God's tribe, and in it particularly the family of Shimei, which was a branch of the tribe of Levi, *1 Chron.* vi. 17. and probably some of the descendants of that family were now of note for preachers to the people, or ministers to the altar; as the princes must mourn for the sins of the magistracy, so must the priests for the *iniquity of the holy things*. In times of general tribulation and humiliation the Lord's ministers are concerned to *weep between the porch and the altar*, *Joel* ii. 17. and not only there, but in their houses apart; for in what families should godliness both in the form and in the power of it be found, if not in ministers families?

C H A P. XIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Some further promises relating to gospel-times; here is a promise of the remission of sins, ver. 1. And of the reformation of manners, ver. 2. And particularly of the convicting and silencing of false prophets, ver. 2—6. (2.) A clear prediction of the sufferings of Christ, and the dispersion of his disciples thereupon, ver. 7. And of the destruction of the greater part of the Jewish nation not long after, ver. 8. and of the purifying of a remnant of them, a peculiar people to God, ver. 9.

1. **I**N that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness. 2. ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets, and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. 3. And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother, that begat him, shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother, that begat him, shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. 4. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: 5. But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. 6. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

Behold here the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, the sin of the church; for therefore was the Son of God manifested to take away our sin, *1 John* iii. 5.

1. He takes away the guilt of sin by the blood of his cross, ver. 1. In that day, in the gospel-day, there shall be a fountain opened, i. e. provision made for the cleansing of all those from the pollutions of sin that truly repent and are sorry for them. In that day when the Spirit of grace is poured out to set them a mourning for their sins, they shall not mourn as those that have no hope, but they shall have their sins pardoned, and the comfort of it in their bosoms. Their consciences shall be purified and pacified by the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, *1 John* i. 7. For Christ is exalted to give both repentance and remission of sins, and where he gives the one, no doubt he gives the other. This fountain opened is the pierced side of Jesus Christ, spoken of just before, chap. xii. 10. for thence came there out blood and water, and both for cleansing. And those who look upon Christ pierced, and mourn for their sins that pierced him, and are therefore in bitterness for him, may look again upon Christ pierced, and rejoice in him, because it pleased the Lord thus to smite this rock, that it might be to us a fountain of living waters. See here, (1.) How we are polluted; we are all so; we have sinned, and sin is uncleanness, it defiles the mind and conscience, renders us odious to God, and uneasy in ourselves; unfit to be employed in the service of God, and admitted into communion with him, as those that were ceremonially unclean were shut out of the sanctuary. The house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem are under sin, which is uncleanness. The truth is, we are all as an unclean thing, and deserve to have our portion with the unclean. (2.) How we may be purged. Behold there is a fountain opened for us to wash in, and streams flowing to us from that fountain, so that if we be not made clean, it is our own fault. The blood of Christ and God's pardoning mercy in that blood revealed in the new covenant is, (1.) A fountain; for there is in them an inexhaustible fulness. There is mercy enough in God, No. lxxviii.

and merit enough in Christ for the forgiving of the greatest sins and sinners, upon gospel-terms. Such were some of you, but you are washed, *1 Cor.* vi. 11. Under the law there was a brazen laver, and a brazen sea to wash in; those were but vessels, but we have a fountain to apply ourselves to, overflowing, ever flowing. (2.) It is a fountain opened, for whoever will, may come and take the benefit of it; it is opened, not only to the house of David, but to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; to the poor and mean as well as to the rich and great; or, it is opened to all believers, who, as the spiritual seed of Christ, are of the house of David, and, as living members of the church, are inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thro' Christ all that believe are justified, are washed from their sins in his blood, that they may be made to our God kings and priests, *Rev.* i. 5, 6.

2. He takes away the dominion of sin by the power of his grace, even of beloved sins; this evermore accompanies the former; those that are washed in the fountain opened as they are justified, so they are sanctified; the water came with the blood out of the pierced side of Christ. It is here promised that in that day,

1. Idolatry shall be quite abolished, and the people of the Jews shall be effectually cured of their inclination to it, ver. 2. I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land. The worship of the idols of their fathers shall be so perfectly rooted out, that in one generation or two it shall be forgotten that ever there were such idols among them; they shall either not be named at all, or not with any respect; they shall no more be remembered, as was promised, *Hos.* ii. 17. This was fulfilled in the rooted aversion which the Jews had after the captivity to idols and idolatry, and still retain to this day; and in the ready conversion of many to the faith of Christ, by which they were taken off from making an idol of the ceremonial law, as the unbelieving Jews did; and is still in the fulfilling when souls are brought off from the world and the flesh, those two great idols, that they may cleave to God only.

2. False prophecy shall also be brought to an end. I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit, i. e. the prophets that are under the influence of the unclean spirit, to pass out of the land; the devil is an unclean spirit, sin and uncleanness are from him; he hath his prophets, that serve his interests, and receive their instructions from him. Take away the unclean spirit and the prophets would not deceive as they do; take away the false prophets that produce sham-commissions, and the unclean spirit could not do the mischief he doth. When God designs the silencing of the false prophets he banisheth the unclean spirit out of the land; that wrought in them, and was a rival with him for the throne in the heart.

The church of the Jews when they were addicted to idols did also dote much upon false prophets, that flattered them in their sins with promises of impunity and peace, but here it is promised, as a blessed effect of the promised reformation, that they should be very much set against false prophets, and zealous to clear the land of them; they were so after the captivity, till thro' the blindness of their zeal against false prophets they had put Christ to death under that character, and after that, there arose many false christs and false prophets, and deceived many, *Mat.* xxiv. 11. It is here foretold,

1. That false prophets instead of being indulged and favoured, should be brought to condign punishment even by their nearest relations, which would be as great an instance as any other of flagrant zeal against those deceivers, ver. 3. When any shall set up for a prophet, and shall speak lies in the name of the Lord, shall preach that which tends to draw people from God, and to confirm them in sin, his own parents shall be the first and most forward to prosecute him for it, according to the law, *Deut.* xiii. 6—11. If thy son entice thee secretly from God, thou shalt surely kill him. Shew thy indignation against him, and prevent any further temptation from him. His father and mother shall thrust him thro' when he prophesieth. Note, We ought to conceive and always to retain a very great detestation and dread of every thing that would draw us out of the way of our duty into by-paths, as those who cannot bear that which is evil, *Rev.* ii. 2. And holy zeal for God and godliness, will make us hate sin and dread temptation most in those whom naturally we love best, and who are nearest to us; there our danger is greatest as Adam's from Eve, Job's from his wife, and there it will be most praise-worthy to shew our zeal as Levi, who, in the cause of God, did not acknowledge his brethren, or know his own children, *Deut.* xxxiii. 9. Thus we must hate and forsake our nearest relations, when they come in competition with our duty to God, *Luke* xiv. 26. Natural affections, even the strongest, must be over-ruled by gracious affections.

2. That false prophets should be themselves convinced of their sin and folly, and let fall their pretensions, ver. 4. The prophet shall be ashamed every one of his vision, they shall not repeat it, or insist upon it, but desire that it may be forgotten, and no more said of it, being ready themselves to own it was a sham; either because God has by his grace awakened their consciences, and shewed them their error, or because the event disproves their predictions, and gives them the lye, or because their prophecies do not meet with such a favourable reception as they used to meet with,

with, but are generally despised and distasteful; they perceive the people ashamed of them, which makes them begin to be ashamed of themselves. And therefore they shall no longer wear a rough garment, or garment of hair, as the true prophets used to do, in imitation of Elijah, and in token of their being mortified to the pleasures and delights of sense. The pretenders had appeared in the habit of true prophets, but their folly being now made manifest they shall lay it aside, no more to deceive and impose upon unthinking unwary people by it. A modest dress is a very good thing, if it be the genuine indication of a humble heart, and is to instruct, but an ill thing if it be the hypocritical disguise of a proud ambitious heart, and is to deceive. Let men be really as good as they seem to be, but not seem to be better than really they are. This pretender as a true penitent, (1.) Shall undeceive those whom he had imposed upon. *He shall say, I am no prophet, as I have pretended to be, was never designed or set apart to the office, never educated or brought up for it, never conversant among the sons of the prophets, I am an husbandman, and was bred to that business, I was never taught of God to prophesy, but taught of man to keep cattle.* Amos was originally such a one too, and yet was afterwards called to be a prophet, Amos vii. 14, 15. But this deceiver never had any such call. Note, Those who sorrow after a godly sort for their having deceived others, will be forward to confess their sin, and will be so just as to rectify the mistakes which they have been the cause of. Thus they who had used curious arts when they were converted shewed their deeds, and by what fallacies they had cheated the people, Acts xix. 18. (2.) He shall return to his own proper employment, which is the fittest for him; *I will be a husbandman, so it may be read, I will apply myself to my calling again, and meddle no more with things that belong not to me, for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth, and cattle I will go keep, and never set up for a preacher any more.* Note, When we are convinced that we are gone out of the way of our duty, we must evidence the truth of our repentance by returning to it again, tho' it be never so much a mortification to us. (3.) He shall acknowledge those to be his friends that by a severe discipline were instrumental to bring him to a sight of his error, ver. 6. when he who with the greatest assurance had asserted himself so lately to be a prophet, suddenly drops his claims, and faith, I am no prophet, every body will be surprized at it, and some will ask *what are these wounds or marks of stripes in thine hands?* How camest thou by them? Hast thou not been examined by scourging? And is not that it that has brought thee to thy self? *Vexatio dat intellectum*; hast thou not been beaten into this acknowledgment? Was it not the rod and reproof that gave thee this wisdom? And he shall own, yes, it was, these are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends, that bound me, and used me hardly and severely as a distracted man, and so brought me to my senses. By this it appears that those parents of the false prophet that thrust him thro', ver. 3. did not do it till they had first tried to reclaim him by correction, and he would not be reclaimed, for so was the law concerning a disobedient son, his parents must first have chastened him in vain, before they bring him forth to be stoned, Deut. xxi. 18, 19. But here is another that was reduced by stripes, and so prevented the capital punishment; and he had that sense and honesty to own that they were his friends, his real friends, who thus wounded him that they might reclaim him; for faithful are the wounds of a friend, Prov. xxvii. 6. Some good interpreters observing how soon this comes after the mention of Christ's being pierced, think that these are the words of that great prophet, not of the false prophet spoken of before; Christ was wounded in his hands, when they were nailed to the cross, and after his resurrection he had the marks of these wounds; and here he tells how he came by them; he received them as a false prophet, for the chief priests called him a deceiver, and upon that account would have him crucified; but he received them in the house of his friends, the Jews that should have been his friends: for he came to his own; and tho' they were his bitter enemies, yet he was pleased to call them his friends, as he did Judas, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Because they forwarded his sufferings for him; as he called Peter, Satan, an adversary, because he disswaded him from them.

7. ¶ Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, faith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. 8. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, faith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off, and die, but the third shall be left therein. 9. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

Here is a prophecy,

1. Of the sufferings of Christ, of him who was to be pierced, and was to be the fountain opened. Awake, O sword, against my

shepherd, ver. 7. These are the words of God the Father, giving order and commission to the sword of his justice to awake against his Son, when he had voluntarily made his soul an offering for sin; for it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief; and he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, Isa. liii. 4, 10. Observe, (1.) How he calls him. As God he is my fellow, for he thought it no robbery to be equal with God; he and the Father are one. He was from eternity by him, as one brought up with him, and in the work of man's redemption he was his elect, in whom his soul delighted, and the counsel of peace was between them both. As mediator he is my shepherd, that great and good shepherd that undertook to feed the flock, chap. xi. 7. He is the shepherd that was to lay down his life for the sheep. (2.) How he useth him. Awake, O sword, against him. If he will be a sacrifice, he must be slain, for without the shedding of blood, the life-blood, there was no remission. Men thrust him thro' as a foolish shepherd, God thrust him thro' as the good shepherd, compare ver. 3. that he might purchase the flock of God with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. It is not a charge given to a rod to correct him, but to a sword to slay him, for Messiah the prince must be cut off, but not for himself, Dan. ix. 26. It is not the sword of war to whom he has given this charge, that he may die in the bed of honour, but the sword of justice, that he may die as a criminal, upon an ignominious tree. This sword must awake against him; he having no sin of his own to answer for, the sword of justice had nothing to say to him of itself, till by particular order from the Judge of all, it was warranted to brandish itself against him. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, in the decree and council of God, but the sword designed against him had long slumbered, till now at length it is called upon to awake, not awake and frighten him, but awake and smite him; strike home; not with a drowsy blow, but an awakened one; for God spared not his own son.

2. Of the dispersion of the disciples thereupon. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. This our Lord Jesus himself faith was fulfilled, when all his disciples were offended because of him in the night wherein he was betrayed, Mat. xxvi. 31. Mark xiv. 27. They all forsook him and fled. The smiting of the shepherd is the scattering of the sheep. They were scattered every one to his own, and left him alone, John xvi. 32. Herein they were like timorous sheep, yet the shepherd thus provided for their safety, for he said, If ye seek me, let these go their way. Some make another application of this; Christ was the shepherd of the Jewish nation; he was smitten, they themselves smote him, and therefore they were justly scattered abroad; and dispersed among the nations, and remain so at this day. These words, I will turn my hand upon the little ones, may be understood either as a threatening, as Christ suffered so shall his disciples; they shall drink of the cup that he drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with; or, as a promise that God would gather Christ's scattered disciples together again, and he should give them the meeting in Galilee. Tho' the little ones among Christ's soldiers may be dispersed, they shall rally again, the lambs of his flock tho' frightened by the beasts of prey shall recover themselves, shall be gathered in his arms, and laid in his bosom. Sometimes when the sheep are scattered and lost in the wilderness, yet the little ones, which it was feared would be a prey, Numb. xiv. 31. are brought in, are brought home, and God turns his hand upon them.

3. Of the rejection and ruin of the unbelieving Jews, ver. 8. and this word has and shall have its accomplishment in the destruction of the corrupt and hypocritical part of the church. It shall come to pass that in all the land of Israel two parts shall be cut off and die; the Roman army laid the country waste, and slew at least two thirds of the Jews. Some understand by the cutting off and dying of two parts in all the earth, the abolishing of Heathenism, and Judaism, that Christianity, the third part, might be left to reign alone. The Jewish worship was quite taken away by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. And some time after Pagan idolatry was in a manner extirpated, when the empire became Christian.

4. Of the reformation and preservation of the chosen remnant, those of them that believed, and the Christian church in general, ver. 9. The third part shall be left; when Jerusalem and Judea were destroyed, all the Christians in that country having among them the warning Christ gave them to flee to the mountains, shifted for their own safety, and were sheltered in a city called Pella on the other side Jordan. We have here first the trials, and then the triumphs of the Christian church, and of all the faithful members of it. (1.) Their trials. I will bring that third part thro' the fire of affliction, and will refine and try them as silver and gold are refined and tried. This was fulfilled in the persecutions of the primitive church, the fiery trial which tried the people of God then, 1 Pet. iv. 12. Those that God sets apart for himself must pass thro' a probation, and purification in this world; they must be tried that their faith may be found to praise and honour, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. as Abraham's faith was when it was tried by the command given him to offer up Isaac; now know I that thou fearest me. They must be tried, that both they that are perfect, and they that are not, may be made manifest. They must be refined from their dross, their corruption must be purged out, they must

be brightened and bettered. (2.) Their triumphs. (1.) Their communion with God is their triumph. *They shall call on my name, and I will hear them.* They write to God by prayer, and receive from him answers of peace, and thus keep up a comfortable communion with him; this honour have all his saints. (2.) Their covenant with God is their triumph. *I will say, It is my people, whom I have chosen and loved, and will own, and they shall say, The Lord is my God, and a God all-sufficient to me; and in him they shall boast every day, and all the day long. This God is our God for ever and ever.*

C H A P. XIV.

Divers things were foretold in the two foregoing chapters which should come to pass in that day; and this chapter speaks of a day of the Lord that cometh, a day of his judgment; and ten times in the foregoing chapters, and seven times in this it is repeated, in that day, but what that day is that is here meant is uncertain, and perhaps will be so (as the Jews speak) till Elias comes; whether it refer to the whole period of time, from the prophets days to the days of the Messiah, or to some particular events in that time, or to Christ's coming, and the setting up of his kingdom upon the ruins of the Jewish polity, we cannot determine; but divers passages here seem to look as far forward as gospel-times. Now the day of the Lord brings with it both judgment and mercy; mercy to his church, judgment to her enemies and persecutors. (1.) The gates of hell are here threatening the church, ver. 1, 2. and yet not prevailing. (2.) The power of heaven appears here for the church, and against the enemies of it, ver. 3, 4, 5. (3.) The events concerning the church are here represented as mixed, ver. 6, 7. but issuing well at last. (4.) The spreading of the means of knowledge is here foretold, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom in the world, ver. 8, 9. which shall be the enlargement and establishment of another Jerusalem, ver. 10, 11. (5.) Those shall be reckoned with, that fought against Jerusalem, ver. 12—15. and those that neglect his worship there, ver. 17—19. (6.) It is promised that there shall be great resort to the church, and great purity and piety in it, ver. 16, 20, 21.

1. **B**Ehold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. 2. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished, and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 4. ¶ And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east, and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. 5. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains: for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. 6. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark. 7. But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening-time it shall be light.

God's providences concerning his church are here represented as strangely changing, and strangely mixed.

1. As *strangely changing*. Sometimes the tide runs high and strong against them, but presently turns and comes to be in favour of them; and God has for wise and holy ends set the one over against the other.

(1.) God here appears against Jerusalem; judgment begins at the house of God; when the day of the Lord cometh, (ver. 1.) Jerusalem must pass through the fire to be refined. God himself gathers all nations against Jerusalem to battle, ver. 2. he gives them a charge as he did Sennacherib to take the spoil, and to take the prey, Isa. x. 6. for the people of Jerusalem are now become the people of his wrath. And who can stand before him, or before nations gathered by him? Where he gives commission he will give success, the city shall be taken by the Romans, that have nations at command; the houses shall be rifled, and all the riches of them taken away by the enemy, and to gratify an insatiable lust of uncleanness as well as avarice, the women shall be ravished; as

if victory were a licence to the worst of villainies, *Jusque datum sceleri.* One half of the city shall then be carried into captivity to be sold or enslaved, and shall not be able to help themselves, such is the destruction that shall be made in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

(2.) He presently changeth his way and appears for Jerusalem; for tho' judgment begin at the house of God, yet, as it shall not end there, so it shall not make a full end there, Jer. iv. 27. — xxx. 11.

1. A remnant shall be spared; the same with that third part spoken of, chap. xiii. 8. One half shall go into captivity, whence they may hereafter be fetched back; and the residue of the people shall not be cut off, as one would have feared, from the city. Many of the Jews shall receive the gospel, and so shall prevent their being cut off from the city of God, his church upon earth. In it shall be a tenth, Isa. vi. 13. See Ezek. v. 3.

2. Their cause shall be pleaded against their enemies, ver. 3. Then when God has made use of these nations as a scourge to his people, he shall go forth and fight against them, by his judgments, as when he fought against the enemies of his church formerly, in the day of battle, with the Egyptians, Canaanites, and others. Note, The instruments of God's wrath will themselves be made the objects of it; for it will come to their turn to drink of the cup of trembling; and whom God fights against he will be sure to overcome, and be too hard for. And every former day of battle which God has made to his people a day of triumph, as it is an engagement to God to appear for his people, because he is the same, so it is an encouragement to them to trust in him. It is observable, that the Roman empire never flourished after the destruction of Jerusalem as it had done before, but in many instances God fought against it.

3. Tho' Jerusalem and the temple be destroyed, yet God will have a church in the world, into which Gentiles shall be admitted, and with whom the believing Jews shall be incorporated, ver. 4, 5. These verses are dark and hard to be understood, but divers good expositors take this to be the meaning of them. (1.) God will carefully inspect Jerusalem, even then when the enemies of it are laying it waste; his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, whence he may take a full view of the city and temple, Mark xiii. 3. When the refiner puts his gold into the furnace, he stands by it and has his eye upon it, to see that it receive no damage, so when Jerusalem, God's gold, is to be refined, he will have the oversight of it. He will stand by upon the mount of Olives; this was literally fulfilled when our Lord Jesus was often upon this mountain, especially when from thence he ascended up into heaven, Acts i. 12. It was the last place on which his feet stood on this earth, the place from which he took rise. (2.) The partition wall between Jews and Gentiles shall be taken away. The mountains about Jerusalem, and particularly this, signified it to be an inclosure, and stood in the way of those that would approach to it. Between the Gentiles and Jerusalem this mountain of Bether, of division stood, Cant. ii. 17. But by the destruction of Jerusalem this mountain shall be made to cleave in the midst, and so the Jewish pale shall be taken down, and the church laid in common with the Gentiles, who were made one with the Jews, by the breaking down of this middle wall of partition, Eph. ii. 14. Who art thou, O great mountain? And a great mountain the ceremonial law was, in the way of the Jews conversion, which one would think could never have been got over, yet before Christ and his gospel it was made plain: this mountain departs, this hill removes, but the covenant of peace cannot be broken; for peace is still preached to him that is afar off, and to them that are nigh. (3.) A new and living way shall be opened to the new Jerusalem, both to see it, and to come into it. The mountain being divided one half towards the north, and the other half towards the south, there shall be a very great valley, i. e. a broad way of communication opened between Jerusalem and the Gentile world; by which the Gentiles shall have free admission into the gospel Jerusalem, and the word of the Lord that goes forth from Jerusalem shall have a free course into the Gentile world. Thus the way of the Lord is prepared, for every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and plain and pleasant vallies shall come in the room of them, Isa. xl. 4. (4.) Those of the Jews that believe shall come in and join themselves to the Gentiles, and incorporate with them in the gospel-church, ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains, that valley that is opened between the divided halves of the mount of Olives; they shall hasten into the church with the Gentiles, as formerly the Gentiles with them, Zech. viii. 23. The valley of the mountains is the gospel-church, to which there were added of the Jews daily such as should be saved, who fled to that valley as to their refuge. This valley of the mountains is said to reach unto Azal, or to the separate place, i. e. to all those whom God hath set apart for himself; when God makes his mountains a way, (Isa. xlix. 11.) by making them a valley, the way shall be opened to all the way-faring men, (Isa. xxxv. 8.) and, tho' fools, they shall not err therein. Or, to those that are now separated from God, this valley shall reach; for the Gentiles that are afar off shall be made nigh with the Jews that are a people near unto him, and both have an access, a mutual access to each other, and a joint access to God as a Father by one Spirit, Eph. ii. 18. (5.) They shall flee to the valley of the mountains,

tains, to the gospel-church under dreadful apprehensions of their danger from the curse of the law. They shall *flee from the wrath to come*, from the avenger of blood that is in pursuit of them, to the church as to a *city of refuge*, or as doves to their windows, as they *fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziab*, Amos i. 1. Therefore the gospel reveals the wrath of God from heaven, Rom. i. 17. that we might be awakened to *escape for our lives*. Flee as from an *earthquake*, for we feel the earth ready to sink under us, and we can find no firm footing in it, and therefore must flee to Christ, in whom alone we can *stand fast* and be *easy*.

4. God shall appear in his glory for the accomplishing of all this. *The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee*, which may refer to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, or to destroy the enemies of Jerusalem, or his coming to set up his kingdom in the world, which is called the *coming of the Son of man*, Mat. xxiv. 37. Or to this last coming at the end of time; however, it teaches us, (1.) That the Lord will come; it has been the faith of all the saints, *behold, the Lord comes* to fulfil every word that he hath spoken in its season. (2.) When he comes all his saints come with him, they attend his motions and are ready to serve his interests; Christ will come at the end of time with *ten thousands of his saints*, as when he came to give the law upon mount Sinai. (3.) Every particular believer being related to God, as his God, may triumph in the expectation of his coming, and speak of it with pleasure, *the Lord my God shall come*, shall come to the comfort of all that are his; for, blessed Lord, *all the saints shall be with thee*, and it shall be their everlasting happiness to dwell in thy presence; and therefore *come, Lord Jesus*. And some think this may be read as a prayer, *Yea, O Lord my God, come, and bring all the saints with thee*.

2. God's providences appear here *strangely mixed*, ver. 6, 7. *In that day of the Lord the light shall not be clear nor dark, not day, nor night; but at evening time it shall be light*. Some refer this to all the time from hence, to the coming of the Messiah; the Jewish church had neither perfect peace, nor constant trouble, but a cloudy day, neither rain nor sunshine. But it may be taken more generally, as designed to represent the method God usually takes in the administration of the kingdom, both of providence and grace. Here is,

1. An idea of the usual course and tenor of God's dispensations; the *day of his grace*, and the *day of his providence* are *neither clear nor dark, not day, nor night*. It is so with the church of God in this world, where the sun of righteousness is risen it cannot be *dark night*, and yet short of heaven it will not be *clear day*. It is so with particular saints; they are not darkness but *light in the Lord*, and yet while there is so much error and corruption remaining in them, it is not perfect day. So it is as to the providences of God that are concerning his church, most an end the affairs of the church are neither good nor bad in any extremity, but there is a mixture of both, we are finging both of mercy and judgment, and are uncertain which will prevail, whether it be an evening or a morning twilight. We are between hope and fear, not knowing what to make of things.

2. An intimation of comfort with reference hereunto. *It shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord*. This intimates (1.) The *beauty and harmony* of such mixed events, there is one and the same design and tendency in all; all the wheels make but *one wheel*; all the revolutions but *one day*. (2.) The *brevity* of them; it is as it were but for *one day*, for a little moment; the cloud that darkens the light will soon blow over. (3.) The eye God has upon all these events, and the hand he has in them all; they are *known to the Lord*; he takes notice of them, and orders and disposeth of all for the best, according to the counsel of his will.

3. An issue very joyful, secured at last; *at evening time it shall be light*; it shall be clear light; and no longer dark; we are sure of it in the other world, and we hope for it in this world. At *evening time* when our hopes are quite spent with waiting all day to no purpose, nay, when we fear it will go to be quite dark, when things are at the worst, and the case of the church is most deplorable. As to the church's enemies *the sun goes down at noon*, so to the church it rises at night; unto the upright springs *light out of darkness*, Psal. cxii. 4. deliverance comes when the tale of bricks is doubled; and when God's people had done looking for it, and so it comes with a *pleasing surprise*.

8. And it shall be in that day, *that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem*: half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. 9. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. 10. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place: from Benjamins gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner-gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the kings wine-

presses. 11. And *men shall dwell in it*, and there shall be no more utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. 12. ¶ And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. 13. And it shall come to pass in that day, *that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them*, and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour. 14. And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel in great abundance. 15. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.

Here is, 1. *Blessings* promised to Jerusalem, the gospel-Jerusalem, in *the day of the Messiah*, and to all the earth, by virtue of the blessings poured out on Jerusalem, especially to the land of Israel.

(1.) Jerusalem shall be a spring of *living waters* to the world: it was made so when there the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and thence the word of the Lord diffused it self to the nations about, ver. 8. *Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem*, for there they began, and thence they set out that were to preach *repentance and remission of sins unto all nations*, Luke xxiv. 47. Note, Where the gospel goes, and the graces of God's Spirit go along with it, there *living waters* go; those streams that *make glad the city of our God*, make glad the country also, and make it like paradise, like the *garden of the Lord*, which was *well watered*. It was the honour of Jerusalem that *from thence the word of the Lord went forth*, Isa. ii. 3. and thus far, even in its worst and most degenerate age, *for old acquaintance sake* it was made a *blessing*, and to be so is to be *blessed*. Half of these waters shall go *towards the former sea*, and *half towards the hinder sea*, as all rivers bend their course towards some sea or other, some eastward, others westward; the gospel shall spread into all parts of the world, some that lie remote from Jerusalem one way, and others that lie as far off another way; for the dominion of the Redeemer which was thereby to be set up must be *from sea to sea*, Psal. lxxii. 8. and the earth must be full of the knowledge of the Lord, *as the waters cover the sea*, and as the waters that in various channels run to the sea. The knowledge of God shall diffuse it self, (1.) *Every way*. These living waters shall produce both *eastern churches*, and *western churches*, that shall each of them in their turn be illustrious. (2.) *Every day*; in *summer* and in *winter it shall be*. Note, Those that are employed in spreading the gospel, may find themselves work both *winter and summer*; and are to serve the Lord therein at *all seasons*, Acts xx. 18. And such a divine power goes along with these *living waters* that they shall not be dried up, or the course of them be obstructed, either by the droughts in *summer*, or the frosts in *winter*.

(2.) The kingdom of God among men shall be an *universal and united kingdom*, ver. 9. (1.) It shall be an *universal kingdom*; *the Lord shall be king over all the earth*. He is and ever was *so of right*; and in the sovereign disposals of his providence; his kingdom doth *rule over all*, and none are exempt from his jurisdiction; but it is here promised that he shall be so by *actual possession* of the hearts of his subjects; he shall be acknowledged king by all, in all places; his authority shall be owned and submitted to, and allegiance sworn to him. This will have its accomplishment with that word, Rev. xi. 15. *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ*. (2.) It shall be an *united kingdom*. *There shall be one Lord, and his name one*. All shall worship one God only, and not idols, and shall be unanimous in the worship of him. All false gods shall be *abandoned*, and all false ways of worship *abolished*, and as God shall be the centre of their unity, in whom they shall all meet, so the scripture shall be the rule of their unity, by which they shall all walk.

3. The land of Judea and Jerusalem its mother city shall be *repaired and replenished*, and taken under the special protection of heaven, ver. 10, 11. Some think this speaks particular favour to the people of the Jews, and points at their conversion, and restoration in the latter days; but it is rather to be understood figuratively of the gospel-church, typified by Judah and Jerusalem, and it signifies the abundant graces with which the church shall be crowned, and the fruitfulness of its members, and the vast numbers of them. (1.) The church shall be like a *fruitful country*, abounding in all the rich products of the soil. The whole land of Judea which is naturally uneven and hilly, shall be *turned as a plain*, it shall become a smooth, level valley, from Geba to Gibeah its utmost border north, to Rimmon which lay *south of Jerusalem*, and was the utmost southern limit of Judea. The

The gospel of Christ where it comes in its power *levels the ground, mountains and hills are brought low by it*, that the Lord alone may be exalted. (2.) It shall be like a *populous city*. As the holy land shall be levelled, so the holy city shall be peopled; shall be rebuilt, and replenished. *Jerusalem shall be lifted up out of its low estate, shall be raised out of its ruins; when the land is turned as a plain, and not only the mount of Olives removed, ver. 4. but other mountains too, then Jerusalem shall be lifted up, i. e. shall appear the more conspicuous; she shall be inhabited in her place, even in Jerusalem, chap. xii. 6.* The whole city shall be inhabited, in the utmost extent of it, and no part of it left to lie waste. The utmost limits of it are here mentioned, betwixt which there shall be no ground lost, but all built upon, from Benjamin's-gate north-east, to the corner-gate north-west; and from the tower of Hananeel in the south, to the king's wine-presses in the north; when the churches of Christ in all places are replenished with great numbers of holy, humble, serious Christians, and many such are daily added to it, then this promise is fulfilled. (3.) This country and this city shall both be safe, both the meat in the country, and the mouths in the city, *they that dwell in it, shall dwell securely, and there shall be none to make them afraid; there shall be no more of that utter destruction that has laid both town and country waste, no more anathema, as some read it, no more cutting off, no more curse or separation from God to evil, no more such desolating judgments as you have been groaning under, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited; there shall be no danger, nor any apprehension of it; neither shall its friends be fearful to disquiet themselves, nor its enemies formidable, to disquiet them.* That promise of Christ explains this, that the *gates of hell shall not prevail against the church*; and so doth that holy security and serenity of mind which believers enjoy in relying on the divine protection.

2. Here are judgments threatened against the enemies of the church, that *have fought* or do fight against Jerusalem; and the *threatening of these judgments* is in order to the preservation of the church in safety: men that read and hear of these plagues will be afraid of fighting against Jerusalem, much more when these threatnings are fulfilled in some, will others hear and fear: those that fight against the city of God, and his people, will be found fighting against God, against whom none ever hardened his heart and prospered, *ver. 12. This shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; whoever they are, God will punish them for the affront done to him, and avenge Jerusalem upon them.*

1. They shall waste away under grievous and languishing diseases. *Their flesh shall consume away, and they shall be miserably emaciated even while they stand on their feet, so that they shall be walking skeletons, nothing shall remain but skin and bones. The flesh which they pampered and indulged, and made provision for, when they were fed to the full with the spoils of God's people, shall now consume away that it cannot be seen, and the bones that were not seen, shall stick out, Job xxxiii. 21. They keep their feet, and hope to keep their ground, crawling about as long as they can, but must yield at last. The organs of sight, the out-lets of sin, their eyes shall consume away in their holes, shall sink into their heads, or perhaps start out of them; their envious, malicious, adulterous eyes, the eyes they had so often fed with spectacles of misery, these shall consume, which shall make not only their countenances ghastly, but their lives wretched. The organs of speech, the out-lets of sin, their tongue shall consume away in their mouth; whereby God will reckon with them for all their blasphemies against himself, and invectives against his people. Thus their own tongues shall fall upon them, and their punishment shall be legible in their sin, as his was whose tongue was tormented in hell-flames. Thus Antiochus and Herod consumed away.*

2. They shall be dashed in pieces one against another, *ver. 13. A great tumult from the Lord shall be among them. But are tumults from the Lord, who is the God of order, and not of confusion? As they are the sin of those that raise them, they are not from the Lord, but from the wicked one, and from men's own lusts, but as they are the punishment of those that suffer by them they are from the Lord, who serves his own purposes, and carries on his intentions, by the sins and follies, and restless spirits of men. It is of themselves they bite and devour one another, but it is of the Lord, the righteous judge, that thus they are consumed one of another, Gal. v. 15. as Ahab was deceived by a lying spirit from the Lord, so Abimelech and the men of Shechem were divided, and so destroyed by an evil spirit from the Lord, Judg. ix. 23. Note, Those that are confederate and combined against the church, will justly be separated, and set against one another; and their tumults raised against God will be avenged in tumults among themselves. And they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, to hold him from striking, or to bind him as his prisoner, nay, his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour, to strike and wound him. Note, Those that aim to destroy the church are oft made to destroy one another; and every man's sword is sometimes set against his fellow, by him whose sword they all are.*

Some think this was fulfilled in the factions and dissensions that were among the Jews, when the Romans were destroying them all; for they had fought against the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel No. lxxviii.

church; and to that well enough agrees, *ver. 19. Thou also, O Judah, shalt fight against Jerusalem, i. e. the Jewish nation shall be ruined by itself, shall die by its own hands; the city and country shall be at war with each other, and so both shall be destroyed. Suis & ipsa Roma viribus ruit.*

3. The plunder of their camp shall greatly enrich the people of God, or the spoils of their country, *ver. 14. Judah also shall eat at Jerusalem, so one learned interpreter reads it, people shall come from all parts to share in the prey; as when Sennacherib's army was routed before Jerusalem, there was the prey of a great spoil divided, Isa. xxxiii. 23. so it shall be now; the wealth of all the heathen round about that had spoiled Jerusalem, shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance; that an equal dividend may be made among all the parties entitled to a share of the prize. Note, The wealth of the sinner is often laid up for the just; and the Israel of God enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians.*

4. The very cattle shall share in the plague with which the enemies of God's church shall be cut off; as they did in divers of the plagues of Egypt, *ver. 15. All the beasts that shall be in the tents of these wicked men, when God comes to contend with them, shall perish with them. Not only beasts used in war, as the horse, but those used for travel, or in the plough, as the mule, the camel, and the ass. Note, The inferior creatures often suffer for the sin of man, and in his plagues. Thus God will shew his indignation against sin, and will make the creature that is thus subject to vanity, groan to be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. viii. 21, 22.*

16. ¶ And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. 17. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem, to worship the King the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. 18. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain: there shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. 19. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. 20. ¶ In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORDS house shall be like the bowls before the altar. 21. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be Holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice, shall come and take of them, and feed therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

Three things are here foretold.

1. That a gospel-way of worship being set up in the church, there shall be a great resort to it, and a general attendance upon it. Those that were left of the enemies of religion shall be so sensible of the mercy of God to them in their narrow escape, that they shall apply themselves to the worship of the God of Israel, and pay their homage to him, *ver. 16. Those that were not consumed shall be converted, and this makes their deliverance a mercy indeed, a double mercy; it is a great change that the grace of God makes upon them; they that had come against Jerusalem finding their attempts vain and fruitless, shall become as much her admirers as ever they had been her adversaries, and shall come to Jerusalem to worship there; and go in concurrence with those whom they had gone contrary to. Note, Christ's foes as some of them shall be made his footstool, so others of them shall be made his friends; and when the principle of enmity is slain in them, their former acts of hostility are pardoned to them, and their services are admitted and accepted, as tho' they had never fought against Jerusalem. They shall go up to worship at Jerusalem, because that was the place that God had chosen, and there the temple was, which was a type of Christ and his mediation. Converting grace sets us right, (1.) In the object of our worship. They shall no longer worship the Molochs and Baals, the kings and lords that the Gentiles worship, the creatures of their own imagination, but the King, the Lord of hosts, the everlasting King, the King of kings, the sovereign Lord of all. (2.) In the ordinances of worship, those which God himself hath appointed. Gospel-worship is here represented by the keeping of the feast of tabernacles, for the sake of those two great graces which were in a special manner acted and signified in that feast, contempt of the world, and joy in God, Neh. viii. 17. The life of a good Christian is a constant feast of tabernacles, and in all acts of devotion we must retire from the world, and rejoice in the Lord; worship as in that feast. (3.) In the mediator of our worship; we must go to Christ, our temple, with all our offerings, for in him only*

our *spiritual sacrifices* are acceptable to God, 1 Pet. ii. 5. If we rest in ourselves, we come short of pleasing God, we must go up to him, and mention his righteousness only. (4.) In the time of it; we must be *constant*. They shall go up from year to year, at the times appointed for this solemn feast. Every day of a Christian's life, is a day of the *feast of tabernacles*, and every Lord's day especially, that is the *great day of the feast*, and therefore every day we must worship the Lord of hosts, and every Lord's day with a peculiar solemnity.

2. That those who neglect the duties of gospel-worship, shall be reckoned with for their neglect. God will compel them to come and worship before him, by suspending his favours from those that keep not his ordinances; *upon them there shall be no rain*, ver. 17. Some understand it figuratively; the rain of heavenly doctrine shall be withheld, and of the heavenly grace which should accompany that doctrine. God will *command the clouds that they rain no rain upon them*. Note, It is a righteous thing with God to withhold the blessings of grace from those that do not attend the means of grace; to deny the *green pastures* to those that attend not the *shepherd's tents*. Or we may take it literally, *on them there shall be no rain* to make their ground fruitful. Note, The gifts of common providence are justly denied to those that neglect and despise instituted ordinances. Those that neglected to build the temple were punished with the want of rain, Hag. ii. 17. and so were they that neglected to attend there, when it was built. If we be barren and unfruitful towards God, justly is the earth made so to us. Many are crossed and go backward in their affairs, and this is at the bottom of it, they do not keep close to the worship of God as they should; they go off from God, and then he walks contrary to them. If we omit or postpone the duties he expects from us, it is just with him to deny the favours we expect from him.

But what shall be done to the defaulters of the land of Egypt, to whom the threatening of the *want of rain* is no threatening, for they *have no rain* at any time, they need none, they desire none; the river Nilus is to them instead of the clouds of heaven, waters their land, and makes it fruitful, so that what is a punishment to others is none to them? ver. 16, 19. It is threatened that *if the family of Egypt go not up that have no rain*, yet God will find out a way to meet with them, for there shall be in effect the same *plague* wherewith other nations are *smitten* for their neglect. God can and often did restrain the overflowing of the river, which was equivalent to the shutting up of the clouds, or if the river did its part, and rose as high as it used to do, God had other ways of bringing famine upon them, and destroying the fruits of their ground, as he did by divers of the ten plagues of Egypt; so that *this, i. e. the same shall be the punishment of Egypt* that is the punishment of other nations, who come not up to *keep the feast of tabernacles*. Note, Those who think themselves least indebted to, and depending on, the mercy of heaven, yet cannot therefore think themselves guarded against the justice of heaven. Those that can *live without rain*, it doth not therefore follow they can *live without God*; for not the heavens only, but all other creatures are that to us (and no more) that God makes them to be; nor can any man's *way of living* enable him to *set light* by the judgments of God. This shall be the *punishment*, (marg.) *This shall be the sin of Egypt, and the sin of all nations, that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles*. The same word signifies both *sin* and the *punishment* of sin, so close and inseparable is the connexion between them; as Gen. iv. 7. and sin is often its own punishment. Note, Omissions are sins, and we must come into judgment for them; those contract guilt that *go not up to worship* at the times appointed, as they have opportunity, and it is a sin that is its own *punishment*; for those who *forsake* the duty *forfeit* the privilege of communion with God.

3. That those who perform the duties of *gospel-worship* shall have grace to adorn their profession by the duties of a *gospel-conversation* too. This is promised, ver. 20, 21. and it is necessary to the compleating of the beauty and happiness of the church. In general, all shall be *holiness to the Lord*. (1.) The name and character of *holiness* shall not be so *confined* as it had been; *holiness to the Lord* had been written only upon the high-priest's forehead, but now it shall not be so appropriated. All Christians shall be *living temples*, and *spiritual priests*, dedicated to the honour of God, and employed in his service. (2.) Real holiness shall be more *diffused* than it had been; because there shall be more powerful means of sanctification, more excellent rules, more cogent arguments and brighter patterns of holiness; and because there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of holiness and sanctification after Christ's ascension than ever before.

1. There shall be *holiness introduced into common things*; and those things devoted to God that seemed very foreign.

(1.) The furniture of their horses shall be consecrated to God.

Upon the bells of the horses shall be engraven *Holiness to the Lord*, or upon the *bridles* of the horses, so the margin, or the *trappings*. The horses used in war shall no longer be used against God and his people as they have been, but for him and them. Even their *wars* shall be *holy wars*; their troopers serving under God's banner. Their great men that *ride in state* with a pompous retinue shall reckon it their greatest ornament to honour God with their honours; *holiness to the Lord* shall be written on the harness of their chariot-horses, as great men have sometimes their coat of arms with their motto painted on their coaches; every gentleman shall take the high-priest's motto for his, and glory in it, and make it a *memento* to himself, not to do any thing unworthy of it. Travellers shall have it upon their *bridles* with which they guide their horses, as those that desire always to be put in mind of it, by having it continually before them, and to guide themselves in all their motions by this rule. The *bells of the horses* which are designed to quicken them in their journey, and to give notice of their approach, shall have *Holiness to the Lord* upon them, to signify that this is that we ought to be *influenced* by ourselves, and *make profession* of to others, wherever we go.

(2.) The furniture of their houses too shall be consecrated to God, to be employed in his service. (1.) The furniture of the *priests houses*, or apartments adjoining to the *house of the Lord*. The common drinking cups they used shall be *like the bowls before the altar*, that were used either to receive the blood of the sacrifices, or to present the wine and oil in, which were for the *drink-offerings*. The vessels which they used at *their own tables* shall be used in such a religious manner, with such sobriety and temperance, such devotedness to the glory of God, and such a mixture of pious thoughts and expressions, that their meals shall look like *sacrifices*; they shall not eat and drink to themselves, but to him that *spreads their tables* and *fills their cups*. And thus in ministers families especially, should common actions be done *after a godly sort*, however they are done in other families. (2.) The furniture of other houses, those of the common people. *Every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord*. The pots in which they boiled their meat, the cups out of which they drank their wine, Jer. xxxv. 5. In these God's good creatures shall never be abused to excess, nor that made the food and fuel of lust, which should have been oil to the wheels of obedience, as had formerly been, when *all tables were full of vomit and filthiness*, Isa. xxiii. 8. What they eat and drink out of, these shall nourish their bodies for the service of God; and out of these they shall give liberally for the relief of the poor, then are they *Holiness to the Lord*, as the merchandize and the hire of the converted Tyrians is said to be, Isa. xxiii. 18. for both in our *gettings* and in our *spendings* we must have an eye to the will of God as our rule, and the glory of God as our end. (3.) When there shall be such an abundance of *real holiness*, people shall not be nice and curious about *ceremonial holiness*. *They that sacrifice shall come and take of these common vessels and seeke their sacrifices therein*, making no distinction between them and the *bowls before the altar*. In gospel-times the true worshippers shall worship God *in spirit and in truth*, and *neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem*, John iv. 21. One place shall be as acceptable to God as another, *I will that men pray every where*; and one vessel as acceptable as another. Little regard shall be had of the *circumstance*, provided there be nothing indecent or disorderly, while the *substance* is religiously *preserved and adhered to*. Some think it intimates that there should be greater numbers of sacrifices offered than the vessels of the sanctuary would serve for, but rather than any should be turned back or deferred, they shall make no difficulty at all of using common vessels, as the Levites in a case of necessity helped the priests to kill the sacrifices, 2 Chron. xxix. 34.

2. There shall be *no unholiness introduced into their sacred things*, to corrupt them. *In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts*. Some read it, there shall be no more *the merchant*, for so a Canaanite sometimes signifies; and they think it was fulfilled when Christ once and again drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Or tho' those that were Canaanites, strangers and foreigners, shall be brought into the house of the Lord, yet they shall cease to be Canaanites; they shall have nothing of the spirit or disposition of Canaanites in them. Or it intimates, that tho' in gospel-times people should grow indifferent as to holy vessels, yet they should be very strict in church discipline, and careful not to admit the profane to special ordinances, but to separate between the precious and the vile, between Israelites and Canaanites. Yet this will not have its full accomplishment short of the heavenly Jerusalem, that *house of the Lord of hosts* into which *no unclean thing shall enter*; for at the end of time, and not before, Christ shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends; and the tares and wheat shall be perfectly and eternally separated.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S

O F T H E

P r o p h e c y o f M A L A C H I.

God's prophets were his witnesses to his church, each in their day for several ages; witnesses for him and his authority, witnesses against sin and sinners, attesting the true intents of God's providences in his dealings with his people then, and the kind intentions of his grace concerning his Church in the days of the Messiah, to whom all the prophets bear witness; for they all agreed in their testimony; and now we have only one witness more to call, and we have done with our evidence; and tho' he be the last, and in him prophecy ceased, yet the Spirit of prophecy shines as clear, as strong, as bright in him, as in any that went before; and his testimony challengeth an equal regard. The Jews say prophecy continued forty years under the second temple, and this prophet they call the seal of prophecy, because in him the series or succession of prophets broke off and came to a period; God wisely ordered it so, that divine inspiration should cease for some ages before the coming of the Messiah, that that great prophet might appear the more conspicuous and distinguishable, and be the more welcome. Let us consider, (1.) The person of the prophet; we have only his name, Malachi, and no account of his country or parentage. Malachi signifies my angel; which has given occasion for a conjecture that this prophet was indeed an angel from heaven, and not a man; as that, Judg. ii. 1. But there is no just ground for the conjecture: Prophets were messengers, God's messengers; this prophet was so; his name is the very same with that which we find in the original, chap. iii. 1. for my messenger; and perhaps from that word he might (tho' probably he had another name) be called Malachi. The Chaldee paraphrase, and some of the Jews suggest that Malachi was the same with Ezra, but that also is groundless; Ezra was a scribe, but we never read that he was a prophet. Others, yet further from probability, made him to be Mordecai. But we have reason to conclude he was a person, whose proper name was that by which he is here called; the tradition of some of the ancients is, that he was of the tribe of Zebulun, and that he died young. (2.) The scope of the prophecy. Haggai and Zechariah were sent to reprove the people for delaying to build the temple, Malachi was sent to reprove them for the neglect of it, when it was built, and for their profanation of the temple-service; for from idolatry and superstition they run into the other extreme of impiety and irreligion; and the sins he witnesseth against are the same that we find complained of in Nehemiah's time, with whom, it is probable, he was cotemporary. And now prophecy was to cease he speaks more clearly of the Messiah as nigh at hand, than any other of the prophets had done, and concludes with a direction to the people of God to keep in remembrance the law of Moses, while they were in expectation of the gospel of Christ.

CHAP. I.

This prophet is sent, first to convince, and then to comfort, first to discover sin, and to reprove for that, and then to promise the coming of him who shall take away sin: and this method the blessed Spirit takes in dealing with souls, John xvi. 8. He first opens the wound, and then applies the healing balm. God had provided (and one would think effectually) for the engaging of Israel to himself by providences and ordinances; but it seems by the complaints here made of them they received the grace of God in both these in vain. (1.) They were very ungrateful to God for his favours to them, and rendered not again according to the benefit they received, ver. 1—5. (2.) They were very careless and remiss in the observance of his institutions; the priests especially were so, that were in a particular manner charged with them, ver. 6, 14. And what shall we say of those whom neither providences nor ordinances work upon? and who affront God in those very things wherein they should honour him?

1. **T**HE burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. 2. I have loved you, saith the LORD: yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, 3. And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains, and his heritage waste, for the dragons of the wilderness. 4. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places: thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and the people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever. 5. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

The prophecy of this book is intitled, *The burden of the word of the Lord*, ver. 1. which intimates, (1.) That it was of great weight and importance; what the false prophets said was light as *the chaff*, what the true prophets said was ponderous as *the wheat*, Jer. xxiii. 28. (2.) That it ought to be often repeated to them and by them, as the *burden of a song*. (3.) That there were those to whom it was a *burden*, and a *reproach*, they were weary of it, and found themselves so aggrieved by it, that they were *not able to bear it*. (4.) That to them it would prove a burden indeed, to sink them to the lowest hell, unless they repented. (5.) That to those who loved it and embraced it, and bid it welcome, tho' it was a *light burden*, as our Saviour calls it, *Mat. xi. 30.* yet it was a *burden*. This *burden of the word of the Lord* was sent, (1.) To Israel, for to them pertained the lively oracles of prophecy, as well as those of the written word. Many prophets God had sent to Israel, and now he will try them with one more. (2.) By Malachi; by the hand of Malachi; as if it were not a message by word of mouth, but a letter put into his hand, for the greater certainty.

In these verses they are charged with ingratitude in that they were not duly sensible of God's distinguishing goodness to them; and such a charge as this may well be called a *burden*, for it is a heavy one.

1. God asserts the great kindness he had, and had oft expressed for them, *ver. 2. I have loved you, saith the Lord.* Thus abruptly doth the sermon begin, as if God intended, whatever reproofs should be given them, to reconcile them to his love, and to take care that they should still have good thoughts of him; *as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.* Thus kindly doth the sermon begin; God will have his people satisfied that he *loves them*, and ever mindful of his love. This is the same with what he said of old to the virgin of Israel, that he might engage her affections to himself, *Jer. xxxi. 3, 4. Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.* In this one word God sums up all his gracious dealings with them; love was the spring of all; he loved them because he would *love them*, *Deut. vii. 7, 8.* loved them in their childhood, *Hos. xi. 1. His delight was in them, Isa. lxii. 4. I have loved you,* but you have not loved me, nor made any suitable returns for my love. Note, God's people need to be often minded of his love to them.

2. They *question his love*, and diminish the instances of it, and seem to quarrel with him, for telling them of it. *Yet ye say wherein hast thou loved us?* As God runs up all his favours to them, to the fountain, which was *his love*, so he runs up all their sins against him to the fountain, which was *their contempt of his love*. Instead of acknowledging his kindness, and studying what they

shall render, they *scorn to own* that they had been beholden to him; *challenge* him to produce proofs of his love that were material, and think and speak very slightly of the instances they had had of his kindness, as if they were so *few, so small*, as not to be worth taking notice of; and no more than what they had sufficiently made returns for, or at least than he had sufficiently balanced with instances of his wrath. Have we not been wasted, impoverished, and carried captive, and wherein then *hast thou loved us?* Note, God justly takes it very ill to have his favours slighted, as not worth speaking of; and it is very absurd for us to ask *wherein he has loved us*, when, which way soever we look, we meet with the proofs and instances of his love to us.

3. He makes it out beyond contradiction, that he had loved them, loved them in a *distinguishing* way, which was in a special manner *obliging*. For proof of this he shews the difference he had made, and would still make between Jacob and Esau, between Israelites and Edomites. Some read their question, *Wherefore hast thou loved us?* as if they did indeed own that he had loved them, but withal insinuate, that there was a reason for it, that he loved them, because their father Abraham had loved him, so that it was not a free love, but a love of debt, to which he replies, was not Esau as near a-kin to Abraham as you are? was he not Jacob's own brother, his elder brother? and therefore if there were any right to a recompence for Abraham's love Esau had it, and yet *I hated Esau, and loved Jacob.*

1. Let them see what a difference God had made between Jacob and Esau. Esau was Jacob's brother, his twin-brother, yet *I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, i. e.* took Jacob into covenant, and entailed the blessing on him and his, but I refused and rejected Esau. Note, Those that are taken into covenant with God, that have the lively oracles, and the means of grace committed to them, have reason to look upon these as tokens of his love. Jacob is *loved* for he hath these, Esau hated, for he has not. The apostle quotes this, *Rom. ix. 13.* and compares it with what the oracle said to Rebecca, concerning her twins, *Gen. xxv. 23. The elder shall serve the younger,* to illustrate the doctrine of God's sovereignty in dispensing his favours; for *may he not do what he will with his own?* Esau was justly *hated*, but Jacob freely *loved*; even so Father, because it *seemed good in thine eyes*, and it is not for us to ask why or wherefore?

2. Let them see what he was now doing; and would do with them; pursuant to this original difference.

1. The Edomites shall be made the monuments of God's justice, and he will be glorified in their utter destruction, for Esau have I hated. *I laid his mountains waste*, the mountains of Seir, which were *his heritage*. When all that part of the world was ravaged by the Chaldean army, the country of Edom was among the rest laid in ruins, and became a habitation *for the dragons of the wilderness*, so perfectly desolate was it; as was foretold, *Isa. xxxiv. 6, 11.* The Edomites had triumphed in Jerusalem's overthrow, *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* and therefore it was just with God to put the same cup of trembling into their hands. And tho' Edom's ruins were *last*, yet they were *lasting*, and the *desolations perpetual*, and in this the difference was made between Jacob and Esau, and is made between the righteous and the wicked, to whom otherwise *all things come alike*, and there seems to be *one event*. Jacob's cities are laid waste, but they are *rebuilt*, Edom's are laid waste, and *never rebuilt*; the sufferings of the righteous will have *an end*, and will *end well*, all their grievances will be redressed, and their sorrow turned into joy; but the sufferings of the wicked will be *endless and remediless*, as Edom's desolations, *ver. 4.* Observe here, (1.) The vain hopes of the Edomites, that they shall have their ruins repaired as well as Israel, tho' they had no promise to build their hope upon. They say, it is true *we are impoverished*, it is the common chance, and there is no remedy, but *we will return, and build the desolate places*, we are resolved we will, not so much as asking God leave; *we will*, whether he will or no; nay, we will do it in defiance of God's curse, and that sentence pronounced upon Edom, *Isa. xxxiv. 10. From generation to generation it shall lie waste.* They build presumptuously as Hiel built Jericho in direct contradiction to the word of God, *1 Kings xvi. 34.* and it will speed accordingly. Note, It is common for those whose hearts are unhumiliated under humbling providences, to think to make their part good against God himself, and to *build* and plant, and flourish again as much as ever, tho' God hath said they shall be *impoverished*. But see, (2.) The dashing of these hopes, and the disappointment of them. They say, *We will build*, but what saith the Lord of hosts? For we are sure his word shall stand, and not theirs; and he saith, (1.) Their attempts shall be baffled; *they shall build, but I will throw down.* Note, Those that walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to them, for *who ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered?* When the Jews had rejected Christ and his gospel, they became Edomites, and this word was fulfilled in them, for when in the time of the emperor Adrian they attempted to rebuild Jerusalem, God by earthquakes and eruptions of fire threw down what they built, so that they were forced to quit the enterprize. (2.) They shall be looked upon by all as abandoned to utter ruin; all that see them shall call them *the border of wickedness*, a sinful nation, incurably so, and therefore *the people against whom the Lord has indignation for ever.* Since their wickedness

wickedness is such as will never be reformed, their desolations shall be such as are never to be repaired. Against Israel God was a little displeased, Zech. i. 15. but against Edom he has indignation, and will have for ever, for they are the people of his curse, Isa. xxxiv. 5.

2. The Israelites shall be made the monuments of his mercy, and he will be glorified in their salvation, ver. 5. Edomites shall be stigmatized as a people hated of God, but your eyes shall see your doubts concerning his love to you for ever silenced, for you shall say, and have cause to say, *The Lord is, and will be magnified from the border of Israel, i. e. from every part and border of the land of Israel.* The border of Edom is a border of wickedness, and therefore the Lord will have indignation against it for ever, but the border of Israel is a border of holiness, the border of the sanctuary, Psal. lxxviii. 54. and therefore God will make it to appear, tho' it may for a time lie desolate, yet he hath mercy in store for it, and from thence he will be magnified; he will give his people Israel both cause and hearts to praise him. When the border of Edom still remains desolate, and the border of Israel is repaired and replenished, then it will appear that God hath loved Jacob. Note, (1.) Those that doubt of God's love to his people, shall sooner or later have convincing and undeniable proofs given them of it; *your own eyes shall see* what ye will not believe. (2.) Deliverances out of trouble are to be reckoned proofs of God's good-will to his people, tho' they may be suffered to fall into trouble, Psal. xxxiv. 19. (3.) Distinguishing favours are very obliging. If God rear up again the border of Israel, but leave the border of Edom in ruins, let no Israelite ask for shame, *wherein hast thou loved us?* (4.) The dignifying of Israel is the magnifying of the God of Israel, and one way or other God will have honour from his professing people. (5.) God's goodness being his glory, when he doth us good we must speak him great; for that is magnifying him. It is an instance of his goodness that he hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, and for this they that love his salvation say, *The Lord be magnified*, Psal. xxxv. 27.

6. ¶ A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name: and ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? 7. Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. 8. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. 9. And now I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts. 10. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. 11. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts. 12. ¶ But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted, and the fruit thereof, even his meat is contemptible. 13. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hands? saith the LORD. 14. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the LORD a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

The prophet is here by a special commission, calling the priests to account, though they were themselves appointed judges, to call the people to an account. Let the rulers in the house of God know that there is one above them, who will reckon with them for their male-administrations. Thus saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, ver. 6. God will have a saying to unfaithful ministers; and it concerns them who speak from God to his people, to hear and heed what he saith to them; that they may save themselves in the first place, otherwise how should they help to save them that hear them. It is a severe, and no doubt a just, reproof, that is here given to the priests, for the profanation of the holy things of God, No. lxxviii.

with which they were intrusted; and if this was the crime of the priests, we have reason to fear the people also were guilty of it; so that what is said to the priests, is said to all, nay, it is said to us, who as Christians profess ourselves not only the people of God, but priests to him. Observe here,

1. What it was that God expected from them, and with what good reason he expected it, ver. 6. *A son honoureth his father*, because he is his father, nature has written this law in the hearts of children, before God wrote it at mount Sinai; nay, a servant, though his obligation to his master be not natural, but by voluntary compact, yet thinks it his duty to honour him; to be observant of his orders, and true to his interests. Children and servants pay respects to their parents and masters, every one cries out shame on them if they do not, and their own hearts cannot but reproach them too; the order of families is thus kept up, and it is their beauty and advantage.

But the priests, that are God's children and his servants, do not fear and honour him. They were fathers and masters to the people, and expected to be called so, Judg. xviii. 19. Mat. xxiii. 7, 10. and to be revered and obeyed as such; but they forgot their Father and Master in heaven, and the duty they owe to him. We may each of us charge it upon ourselves, what is here charged upon the priests. Note, (1.) We are every one of us to look upon God as our father and master, and upon ourselves as his children and servants. (2.) Our relation to God as our father and master, strongly obligeth us to fear and honour him. If we honour and fear the fathers of our flesh, much more the Father and Master of our spirits, Heb. xii. 9. (3.) It is a thing to be justly complained of and lamented, that God is so little feared and honoured, even by those that own him for their father and master. *Where is his honour? Where is his fear?*

2. What the contempt was which these priests put upon God. This is that in general which is charged upon them. (1.) They despised God's name; their familiarity with it, as priests, bred contempt of it, and served them only to gain a veneration by for themselves, and their own name, while God's name was of small account with them. God's name is all that whereby he has made himself known, his word and ordinances, these they had low thought of, and vilified that which it was their business to magnify; and no wonder that when they despised it themselves, they did that which made it despicable to others; even the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred; as Eli's sons did. (2.) They profaned God's name, ver. 12. They polluted it, ver. 7. They not only made no account of sacred things, but they made an ill use of them, and perverted them to the service of the worst and vilest purposes, their own pride, covetousness, and luxury. There cannot be a greater provocation to God, than the profanation of his name; for it is holy and reverend. His purity cannot be polluted by us, for he is unspotted, but his name may be profaned, and nothing profanes it more, than the miscarriages of priests, whose business it is to do honour to it.

This is the general charge exhibited against them; to this they plead not guilty, and challenge God to prove it upon them, and to make good the charge; which added daring impudence to their daring impiety; ye say wherein have we despised thy name? ver. 6. and wherein have we polluted thee? ver. 7. It is common with proud sinners, when they are reprov'd, to stand thus upon their own justification; these priests had most horribly profaned sacred things, and yet, like the adulterous woman, say they have done no wickedness; either they were so inobservant of themselves, that they remembered not, or reflected not upon their own acts; or so ignorant of the divine law, that they thought there was no harm in them, and that what they did could not be construed, despising God's name; or, so atheistical as to imagine, that though they knew their own guilt, yet God did not; or so scornful in their carriage towards God and his prophets, that they took a pride in bantering a serious and just reproof, and turning it off with a jest. They either laugh at the reproof, as those that despise it, and harden their hearts against it; or laugh it off, as those that resolve they will not be touched by it, or not seem to be so. Which way soever we take it, their defence was their offence, and in justifying themselves, their own tongues condemned them, and their saying wherein have we despised thy name, proved them proud and perverse: Had they asked this question with a humble desire, to be told more particularly wherein they had offended, it had been an evidence of their repentance, and had given hopes of their reformation, but to ask it thus in disdain and defiance of the word of God, argues their hearts fully set in them to do evil. Note, Sinners ruin themselves by studying to baffle their own convictions; but they will find it hard to kick against the pricks.

Justly might they have been convicted and condemned upon the general charge, and their plea thrown out as frivolous, but God will not only overcome, but will be clear, will be justified when he judgeth, and therefore he shews them very particularly, wherein they had despised his name, and what the contempt was they cast upon him. As formerly when he charged them with idolatry, so now, when he chargeth them with profaneness, he bids them see their way in the valley, and know what they have done, Jer. ii. 23.

1. They despised God's name in what they said; in the low opinion they had of his institutions; ye say in your hearts, and perhaps

perhaps speak it out when your priests get together over your cups, out of the hearing of the people, *the table of the Lord is contemptible*, ver. 7. and again ver. 12. *ye say the table of the Lord is polluted*, it is to be no more regarded than any other table; either the table in the temple, on which the *shew-bread* was placed, is that which they reflect upon, not understanding the mystery of it, they despised it as an insignificant thing; or rather the altar of burnt-offerings is here called *the table*, for there God, and his priests, and his people did, as it were, feast together upon the sacrifices, in token of friendship; this they thought was *contemptible*; formerly in the days of superstition it was thought *contemptible*, in comparison with the *idolatrous altars* that the heathen had, and was set aside to make room for a new-fashioned one, 2 Kings, xvi. 14, 15. Now it is thought *contemptible* in comparison with *their own tables*; and those of their great men, *the fruit thereof, even his meat is contemptible*. They who served at the altar, were to live upon the altar, but they complained that they lived poorly, and meanly, and it was not worth while to attend the service of the altar, for the *fruit* and *meat* of it, for it was very ordinary, and always the same again; they had no dainties, no varieties, no nice dishes. Nay, that part of the sacrifices which was given to God, the *blood* and the *fat* they looked upon with contempt, as not worthy so many laws God had made about them; they asked what needs so much ado, about burning the fat, and pouring out the blood! Note, Those greatly profane and pollute God's name, that despise the business of religion, though it be very honourable, as not worth *taking pains in*, and the advantages of religion, though highly valuable, as not worth *taking pains for*. Those that live in a careless neglect of holy ordinances, that come to them, and attend on them irreverently, and go away from them never the better, and under no concern, they do in effect say, *the table of the Lord is contemptible*, there is neither virtue nor value in it; neither credit nor comfort from it.

2. They despised God's name in what *they did*, which was of a piece with what they said, and flowed from it; corrupt principles and notions are roots of bitterness, which bear the gall and wormwood of corrupt practices. They looked upon the table and altar of the Lord as *contemptible*, and then,

1. They thought *any thing would serve for a sacrifice*, though never so coarse and mean; and were so far from bringing the best, as they ought to have done, that they picked out the worst they had, which was fit neither for the market, nor for their own tables, and offered that at God's altar. With every sacrifice they were to bring a meat-offering of *fine flour mingled with oil*; but they brought *polluted bread*, ver. 7. coarse bread, servants bread, perhaps it was dry and mouldy, or made of the *refuse of the wheat*, which they thought good enough to be burnt upon the altar; for had it been better, they would have said, *to what purpose is this waste?* And as to the beasts they offered, though the law was express, that what was offered in sacrifice should not have blemish, yet they brought *the blind, and the lame, and the sick*, ver. 5. and again, ver. 13. *the torn, and the lame, and the sick*, that was ready to die of itself. They looked no further than the burning of the sacrifice, and they pleaded it was pity to burn it, if it was good for any thing else. The people were so far convinced of their duty, that they would bring *sacrifices*; they durst not wholly omit the duty, but they brought *vain oblations*, mocked God, and deceived themselves, by bringing the worst they had; and the priests, who should have taught them better, *accepted* the gifts brought to the altar, and *offered* them up there; because, if they should refuse them, the people would bring none at all, and then they would lose their perquisites; and therefore having more regard to their own profit than to God's honour, they accepted that which they knew he would not accept of. Some make ver. 8. to be a continuation of what the priests profanely said, ver. 7. *Ye say to the people, if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, it is not evil; or the lame and the sick, it is not evil*. Note, It is a very evil thing, whether men think so or no, to offer *the blind and the lame, the torn and the sick*, in sacrifice to God. If we worship God *ignorantly* and without understanding, we bring the *blind* for sacrifice; if we do it *carelessly* and without consideration, if we are cold and dull, and dead in it, we bring the *sick*; if we rest in the *bodily exercise*, and do not make heart-work of it, we bring the *lame*; and if we suffer vain thoughts and distractions to lodge within us, we bring *the torn*. And *is not this evil?* Is it not a great affront to God, and a great wrong and injury to our own souls? Do not our books tell us, nay, do not our hearts tell us, that *this is evil?* For God who is the best, ought to be served with the best we have.

2. They would *do no more of their work but what they were paid for*. The priests would offer the sacrifices that were brought to the altar, because they had their share of them, but as for any other service of the temple, that had not a particular fee belonging to it, they would not stir a step, or lend a hand to it; and this was the general temper of them, ver. 10. There is not a man among the priests that would *shut the doors*, or *kindle a fire for nought*. If he were bid to do the smallest piece of service, he would ask, *How shall I be paid for it?* They would do nothing *gratis*, but were all for what they could get, *every one for his gain, from his quarter*, Isa. lvi. 11. Note, Though God has given order that his servants be well paid in this world, yet those are no acceptable ser-

vants to him that are mercenary, and would never do the work, but for the wages.

3. Their work was a perfect drudgery to them, ver. 13. *Ye said also, Behold what a weariness is it?* Both priests and people were of this mind, that they thought God imposed too hard a task upon them; the people grudged the *charge* of providing the sacrifice, and the priests grudged the *pains* of offering it; they thought the feasts of the Lord came too thick, and they were forced to attend too often, and too long in the courts of the Lord; the priests thought it a severe penance imposed upon them, to purify themselves as was required, when they attended the altar, and eat of the holy things; they thought the duty of their office toilsome and troublesome, and *snuffed at it* as unreasonable, and bearing hard upon them; they did it, but it was grudgingly, and with reluctance. God speaks of it in justification of his law, that he had not *made them to serve with an offering, nor wearied them with incense*, Isa. xliii. 23. *Wherein have I wearied thee?* Mic. vi. 3. But their own wicked hearts made it a weariness; and they were as *Doeg, detained before the Lord*, they would rather have been any where else. Note, Those are highly injurious, both to God and themselves, that are weary of his service and worship, and snuff at it.

3. Observe how God expostulates and reasons the case with them, for their conviction and humiliation. (1.) Would they, durst they, affront an earthly prince thus? You offer to God *the lame and the sick, offer it now unto thy governour*, ver. 8. either as tribute, or as a present, when thou art entreating his favour, or in gratitude for some favour received, *will he be pleased with thee?* or rather will he not take himself affronted by it? Note, Those that are careless and irreverent in the duties of religious worship, should consider what a shame it is to offer that *to their God*, which they would scorn to offer *to their governour*, and to be more observant of the laws of breeding, and good manners, than of the laws of religion; and more afraid of being *rude*, than of being profane.

(2.) Could they imagine that such sacrifices as these would be pleasing to God, or answer the end of sacrifices? *Should I accept this of your hands, saith the Lord?* ver. 13. have you any reason to think I should either not *discern* or not *resent* the affront? that I should connive at the violation of my own laws? No, ver. 10. *I have no pleasure in you, and therefore I will not accept an offering, such an offering at your hand*. If God has no pleasure in the person, if he be not in a justified state, if he be not sanctified, he will not accept the offering; God had respect to Abel first, and then to his sacrifice. Note, In order to our acceptance with God, it is not enough to do that which for the matter of it is *good*, but we must do it from a right principle, in a right manner, and for a right end. It was the ancient rule laid down, Gen. iv. 7. *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?* Now if we be not *accepted of God*, in vain do we worship him; it is all lost labour; nay, we are all undone, for ever undone, if we come short of God's acceptance; those therefore make an *ill bargain* for themselves, that to *save charges* in their religion, *miss all the ends* of it; and by thinking to go *the next way to work*, bring *nothing to pass*. Those who make it the top of their ambition, as we all ought to do, *whether present or absent to be accepted of the Lord*, will not dare to bring *the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice*.

(3.) How could they expect to prevail with God in their intercessions for the people, when they thus affronted God in their sacrifices? So some understand ver. 9. as spoken ironically, *and now* if you will do the duty of priests, and stand in the gap, to turn away the judgments of God, that you see ready to pour in upon us, *I pray you beseech God that he will be gracious to us*, and to our land, which is almost *eaten up* with locusts and caterpillars, as appears chap. iii. 11. Try now what interest you have at the throne of grace, improve it for the removing of this plague, for *it has been by your means*, you have provoked God to send it, but as you go on thus to profane his sacred things, *will he regard your persons*, or your prayers? No, you cannot prevail with him to command it away. For *if we regard iniquity in our hearts, God will not hear us*, either for ourselves, or others.

(4.) Had God deserved this at their hands? No, he had provided comfortably for them, and had given them such encouragement in their work, as might have engaged them to do it cheerfully and well, so some understand ver. 10. *Who is there among you that shall shut a door, or kindle a fire for nought?* No, God doth not expect you should serve him *for nothing*, you are well paid for it, and shall be so; not a cup of cold water, given for the honour of God, shall *lose its reward*. Note, The consideration of our constant receivings from God, and the present rewards of obedience in obedience, very much aggravates our slothfulness and niggardliness in our returns of duty to God.

4. He calls them to repentance for their profanations of his holy name. So we may understand ver. 9. *Now I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious to us*. Humble yourselves for your sin, cry mightily to God for pardon, and make up in the faith and fervency of your prayers, what has been wanting in the worth and value of your sacrifices; for all the rebukes of providence we are under, *are by your means*. Note, Those that have by their sins helped to kindle a fire, are highly concerned by their repentance, prayers, and personal reformation, to help to quench it. We must see

see how much God's judgments are *by your means*, and be awakened thereby to be earnest with him to return in mercy; and if we take not this course, how can we think he should regard our persons?

5. He declares his resolution, both to secure the glory of his own name, and to reckon with those that do profane it. Those that put contempt upon God and religion, and think to run down sacred things, let them know,

1. That they shall *not gain their point*; God will magnify his law, and make it honourable, though they vilify it, and make it contemptible; for *ver. 11. from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles*. It might be said, if these be not the worshippers whom God will accept, then he has no worshippers; as if he must make the best of their service, or else he would have no service done him; and then *what will he do for his great name?* But let him alone for that; though Israel be not faithful, *be not gathered*, yet God will be *glorious*; though these priests provoke him to take down the ceremonial œconomy, and to abolish that *law of commandments*, which *could not make the comers thereunto perfect*, yet he will be no loser by that at the long run; for (1.) Instead of those carnal ordinances which they profaned, a spiritual way of worship shall be introduced and established; *incense shall be offered to God's name*, which signifies prayer and praise, *Psal. cxli. 2. Rev. viii. 3.* instead of the blood and fat of bulls and goats. And it shall be a *pure offering*, refined not only from the corruptions that were in the priests practice, but from the meer bodily exercise that was in the institutions themselves, which were called *carnal ordinances*, imposed till the time of reformation, *Heb. ix. 10.* When the hour came, in which *the true worshippers worshipped the Father in spirit, and in truth*; then this *incense was offered*, even this *pure offering*. (2.) Instead of his being worshipped and served among the Jews only, a small people in the corner of the world, he will be served and worshipped in all places, *from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, in every place*, in every part of the world, *incense shall be offered to his name*, nations shall be disciples, and shall speak of the wonderful works of God, and have them spoken to them *in their own language*. This is a plain prediction of that great revolution in the kingdom of grace, by which the Gentiles, that had been *strangers and foreigners*, came to be *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*, and as welcome to the throne of grace as ever the Jews had been. It is twice said, for the thing was certain, *My name shall be great among the Gentiles*, whereas hitherto in Judah only he was *known*, and *his name great*, *Psal. lxxvi. 1.* God's name shall be declared to them, the declaration of it shall be received and believed, and there shall be those among the Gentiles that shall magnify and glorify the name of God, better than ever the Jews had done, even the priests themselves.

2. That they shall *not go unpunished*, *ver. 4.* Here is the doom of those that do like their priests here, for the sentence on them, is a sentence on all such. Observe, (1.) The description of profane and careless worshippers. They are such as *vow and sacrifice to the Lord a corrupt thing*, when they have in their flock *a male*; they *have of the best*, wherewith to serve and honour him; so bountiful has he been in his gifts to them, but they *put him off with the worst*, and think that good enough for him; so ungrateful are they in their returns to him. This was the fault of the people, but the priests connived at it, and indulged them in it. We find a distinction in the law, which allowed that to be *offered for a free-will offering*, which should *not be accepted for a vow*, *Lev. xxii. 23.* But the priests would accept it, though God would not, pretending to be more *indulgent* than he was, for which he will *con them no thanks* another day. (2.) The character given of such worshippers; they are *deceivers*, they deal falsely and fraudulently with God, they play the hypocrite with him; they pretend to honour him in making the vow, but when it comes to be performed, they put an affront upon him, to that degree, that it had been *better not to have vowed than to vow*, and thus to pay, but let not such be themselves deceived, for *God is not mocked*; those that think to put a cheat upon God, will prove in the end to have put a damning cheat upon their own souls. Hypocrites are *deceivers*, and they will prove *self-deceivers*, and so *self-destroyers*. (3.) The doom passed upon them, they are *curled*; they expect a blessing, but will meet with a *curse*, the tokens of God's wrath according to the judgment written. (4.) The reason of this doom; *for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts*, and therefore will reckon with those that deal with me, but as a man like themselves; *my name is dreadful among the heathen*, and therefore I will not bear that it should be contemptible among mine own people. The heathen paid more respect to their gods, though idols, than the Jews did to theirs, though the only true living God. Note, The consideration of God's universal dominion, and the universal acknowledgment of it, should restrain us from all irreverence in his service.



CHAP. II.

There are two great ordinances which divine wisdom hath instituted, the wretched profanation of both which is complained of, and sharply reprov'd in this chapter. (1.) The ordinance of the ministry, which is peculiar to the church, and is designed for the maintaining and keeping up of that; this was profaned by those that were themselves dignified with the honour of it, and intrusted with the business of it. The priests profaned the holy things of God, this they are here charged with, their sin is aggravated, and they are severely threatened for it, ver. 1, 9. (2.) The ordinance of marriage, which is common to the world of mankind, and was instituted for the maintaining and keeping up of that; this was profaned both by the priests and by the people, in marrying strangers, ver. 10, 12. treating their wives unkindly, ver. 13. putting them away, ver. 16. and herein dealing treacherously, ver. 10, 14, 15. And that which was at the bottom of this, and other instances of profaness, was downright atheism, thinking God altogether such a one as themselves, which was in effect to say, there is no God, ver. 17. And these reproofs to them, are warnings to us.

1. **A**ND now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. 2. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. 3. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts, and one shall take you away with it. 4. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. 5. My covenant was with him of life and peace, and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. 6. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. 7. For the priests lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. 8. But ye are departed out of the way: ye have caused many to stumble at the law: ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. 9. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

What was said in the foregoing chapter, was directed to the priests, *chap. i. 6.* Thus saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests that despise my name; but the crimes there charged upon them they were guilty of, as *sacrifices*, and for those they might think it some excuse, that they offered what the people brought, and if they were not so good as they should be, it was not their fault, but the peoples: And therefore here the corruptions there complained of, are traced to the source and spring of them, the faults the priests were guilty of, as *teachers* of the people, as *expositors* of the law, and the lively oracles; and this is a part of their office, which still remains in the hands of gospel ministers, who are appointed to be pastors and teachers, like the priests under the law, though not *sacrificers* like them; and therefore by them the admonition here is to be particularly regarded. If the priests had given the people better instructions, the people would have brought better offerings; and therefore the blame returns upon the priests; and now, O ye priests, this commandment is purely for you, *ver. 1.* who should have taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord, and how to worship him aright. Note, The governors of the churches are under God's government, and to him they are accountable. Even for them that command, God hath commandments. Nay, *ver. 4.* ye shall know that I have sent these commandments for you; shall know it either (1.) By the power of the Spirit working with the word for their conviction and reformation; you shall know its original, by its efficacy whence it comes, by what it doth. When the word of God to us brings about, and carries on the work of God in us, then we cannot but know that he sent it to us; that it is not the word of Malachi God's messenger, but is indeed the word of God, and is sent not only in general to all, but in particular to us. Or (2.) By the accomplishment of the threatnings denounced against them;

them; ye shall know, to your cost, that I have sent this commandment to you, for it shall not return void.

Let us now see what this *commandment* is, that is for the priests, which they must know was sent to them, and put into method the particulars of the charge.

1. Here is a *recital of the covenant* God made with that *sacred tribe*; which was their commission for their work, and the patent of their honour. The Lord of hosts sent a commandment to them, for the establishing of this covenant, (ver. 4.) for his covenant is said to be the word which he commanded, Psal. cv. 8. And he sent this commandment by the prophet at this time, for the re-establishing of it, that it might not be cut off for their persisting in the violation of it. Let the sons of Levi know then (and particularly the sons of Aaron) what honour God put upon their family, and what a trust he reposed in them. Ver. 5. *My covenant was with him of life and peace.* Besides the covenant of peculiarity made with all the house of Israel, there was a covenant of priesthood made with one family, that they should do the services, and upon condition of that should enjoy all the privileges of the priests office. That as Israel was a peculiar nation, a kingdom of priests, so the house of Aaron should be a family of priests, set apart for the service and honour of God, to bear up his name in that nation, as they were to bear up his name among the nations, both the one and the other, in different degrees, were to give glory unto God's name, ver. 2. God covenanted with them as his menial servants, obliged them to do his work, and promised to own and accept them in it. This is called his *covenant of life and peace*, because it was intended for the support of religion, which brings life and peace to the souls of men; life to the dead, peace to the distressed; or because *life and peace* were by this covenant promised to those priests that faithfully and conscientiously discharged their duty, they shall have peace which speaks security from all evil, and *life* which speaks the summary of all good. What is here said of the covenant of priesthood is true, of the covenant of grace made with all believers, as spiritual priests, it is a covenant of *life and peace*, it assures all believers of *life and peace*, everlasting peace, everlasting life of all happiness, both in this world, and in that to come. This covenant was made with the whole tribe of Levi, when they were distinguished from the rest of the tribes, were not numbred with them, but were taken from among them, and appointed over the tabernacle of testimony, Numb. i. 49, 50. by virtue of which appointment God saith, Numb. iii. 12. *The Levites shall be mine.* It was made with Aaron when he and his sons were taken to minister unto the Lord in the priests office, Exod. xxviii. 1. Aaron is therefore called the *saint of the Lord*, Psal. cvi. 16. It was made with Phineas, and his family, a branch of Aaron's upon a particular occasion, Numb. xxv. 12, 13. And there the covenant of priesthood is called, as here, the *covenant of peace*, because by it *peace* was made, and kept between God and Israel. These great blessings of *life and peace* contained in that covenant, God gave to him, to Levi, to Aaron, to Phineas; promised life and peace to them and their posterity, intrusted them with these benefits, for the use and behoof of God's Israel; they received that they might give, as Christ himself did, Psal. lxxviii. 18.

Now for the further opening of this covenant observe, (1.) The consideration upon which it was grounded; it was for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The tribe of Levi gave a signal proof of their holy fear of God, and their reverence for his name, when they appeared so bravely against the worshippers of the golden calf, Exod. xxxii. 26. and for their zeal in that matter, God bestowed this blessing upon them, and invited them to consecrate themselves unto him. Phineas also shewed himself zealous in the fear of God and his judgments, when to stay the plague, he stabbed Zimri and Cozbi, Psal. cvi. 30, 31. Note, Those, and those only that fear God's name, can expect the benefit of the *covenant of life and peace*; and those who give proofs of their zeal for God, it shall without fail be recompensed to them, in the glorious privileges of the Christian priesthood. Some read this not as the consideration of the grant, but as the condition of it, *I gave them to him, provided that he should fear before me.* If God grant us life and peace, he expects we should fear before him.

(2.) The trust that was lodged in the priests, by this covenant, ver. 7. They were hereby made the messengers of the Lord of hosts, messengers of that covenant of life and peace; not mediators of it, but only messengers; or ambassadors, employed to treat of the terms of peace between God and Israel. He is God's mouth to his people, from whom they must receive instructions, according to the lively oracles. This was the office to which Levi was advanced; because in his zeal for God, he did not acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children, therefore they shall teach Jacob God's judgments, Deut. xxxiii. 9, 10. Note, It is an honour to God's servants, to be employed as his messengers, and to be sent on his errands. Angels have their name from thence, Haggai was called the Lord's messenger. This being their office, observe (1.) What is the duty of ministers, the priests lips should keep knowledge, not keep it from his people, but keep it for them: Ministers must be men of knowledge, for how are they able to teach others the things of God, who are themselves unacquainted with those things, or unready in them; they must keep knowledge, must furnish themselves with it, and retain what they have got, that they may be like the good householder, that brings out of his treasury things new

and old. Not only their heads, but their lips must keep knowledge; they must not only have it, but they must have it ready, must have it at hand, must have it (as we say) at their tongues end, to be communicated to others, as there is occasion. Thus we read of wisdom in the lips of him that hath understanding, with which they feed many, Prov. x. 13, 21. (2.) What is the duty of people; they should seek the law at his mouth; should consult the priests as God's messengers, and not only hear the message, but ask questions upon it, that they may the better understand it, and mistakes concerning it may be prevented and rectified. We are all concerned fully to know what the will of the Lord is, to know it distinctly, and certainly should be desirous to know it, and therefore inquisitive concerning it; Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? must not only consult the written word, to the law and to the testimony, but must have recourse to God's messengers, and desire instruction and advice from them, in the affairs of our souls, as we do from physicians and lawyers, concerning our bodies and estates. Not but that ministers ought to lay down the law of God, to those who do not enquire concerning it, or desire the knowledge of it, they must instruct them that oppose themselves, 2 Tim. ii. 25. as well as those that offer themselves; but it is people's duty to apply themselves to them for instruction, not only to hear, but to ask questions; watchman, what of the night? Thus if ye will enquire, enquire ye, see Isa. xxi. 8, 11, 12. People should not only seek comfort at the mouth of their ministers, but seek the law there, for if we be found in the way of duty, we shall find it the way of comfort.

2. Here is a memorial of the fidelity and zeal of many of their predecessors in the priests office, which is mentioned as an aggravation of their sin, in degenerating from such honourable ancestors, and deserting such illustrious examples; and as a justification of God, in withdrawing from them those tokens of his presence, which he had granted to them that kept close to him. See here, ver. 6. how good the godly priest was, whose steps they should have trod in, and what good he did, God's grace working with him. (1.) See how good he was. He was ready and mighty in the scriptures, the law of truth was in his mouth, for the use of those that asked the law at his mouth; and in all his discourses there appeared more or less of the law of truth; every thing he said was under the government of that law, and with it he governed others; he spake as one having authority, every word was a law, and as one that had both wisdom and integrity, it was a law of truth; and truth is a law, it has a commanding power; it is by truth that Christ rules. The law of truth was in his mouth, for his resolutions of cases of conscience proposed to him, were such as might be depended upon; his opinion was good law; iniquity was not found in his lips; he did not handle the word of God deceitfully to please men, to serve a turn, or make an interest for himself, but told all that consulted him what the law was, whether it were pleasing or displeasing? He did not pronounce that unclean which was clean, nor that clean which was unclean, as one of the rabbins expounds it. And his conversation was of a piece with his doctrine, God himself gives him this honourable testimony, he walked with me in peace and equity; he did not think it enough to talk of God, but he walked with him; the temper of his mind, and the tenor of his life, was of a piece with his doctrine and profession, he lived a life of communion with God, and made it his constant care and business to please him; he lived like a priest, that was chosen to walk before God, 1 Sam. ii. 30. His conversation was quiet, he was meek and gentle towards all men, was a pattern and promoter of love, he walked with God in peace, was himself peaceable, and a great peace-maker; and it was honest, he did no wrong to any, but made conscience of rendering to all their due; he walked with me in equity, or rectitude: We must not, for peace sake, transgress the rules of equity, but must keep the peace as far as is consistent with justice; the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable: Ministers of all men are concerned to walk with God in peace and equity, that they may be examples to the flock. (2.) See what good he did; he answered the ends of his advancement to that office, he did turn many away from iniquity, he made it his business to do good, and God crowned his endeavours with wonderful success; he helped to save many a soul from death, and there are multitudes now in heaven blessing God that ever they knew him. Ministers must lay out themselves to the utmost, for the conversion of sinners, and even among those that have the name of Israelites, there is need of conversion work, there are many to be turned from iniquity; and they must reckon it an honour, and a rich reward of their labour, if they may but be instrumental herein; it is God only that by his grace can turn men from iniquity, and yet it is here said of a pious laborious minister, that he turned men from iniquity, as a worker together with God, and an instrument in his hand; and they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars; Dan. xii. 3. Note, Those ministers, and those only, are like to turn men from iniquity, that preach sound doctrine, and live good lives, and both according to the scripture; for as one of the rabbins observes here, when the priest is upright, many will be upright.

3. Here is a high charge drawn up against the priests of the present age, who violated the covenant of the priesthood, and went directly contrary both to the rules, and to the examples that were set before them. Many particulars of their sins we had in the

chapters before, and we find *Neb. xiii.* that there were many corruptions crept into the church of the Jews at this time, mixt marriages, admitting strangers into the house of God, profanation of the sabbath-day, which were all owing to the carelessness and unfaithfulness of the priests; here it is charged upon them in general, (1.) That they transgressed the rule; *ye are departed out of the way*, ver. 8. out of the good way which God hath prescribed to you, and which your godly ancestors walked before you in. It is ill with a people, when those, whose office is to guide them in the way, do themselves depart out of it. *Ye have not kept my ways*, not kept in them yourselves, nor done your part, to keep others in them, ver. 9. (2.) That they betrayed their trust; *ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi*; have violated it, have contradicted the great intentions of it, and have done what in you lay to frustrate and defeat them, you have managed your office, as if it were designed only to feed you fat, and make you great, and not for the glory of God, and the good of the souls of men; this was a *corrupting* of the covenant of Levi, it was perverting the ends of the office, and making it truckle to those sensual secular things, over which it ought always to have dominion. And thus they forfeited the benefit of that covenant, and *corrupted* it to themselves, they *made it void*, and lost that *life and peace*, which was by it settled upon them. We have no reason to expect God should perform his part of the covenant, if we do not make conscience of performing ours. Another instance of their betraying their trust was, that they were *partial in the law*, ver. 9. In the law given to them, they would pick and chuse their duty, this they would do, and that they would not do, just as they pleased, which is the fashion of hypocrites, while those whose hearts are upright with God, have a *respect to all his commandments*. Or rather in the law they were to *lay down* to the people; in this they *knew faces*, so the word is, they *accepted persons*, they wilfully misinterpreted and misapplied the law, either to *cross* those they had a *spleen to*, or *countenance* those they had a *kindness for*; would wink at those sins in some, which in others they would be sharp upon, according as their interest or inclination led them. God is *no respecter of persons* in making his law, nor will he in reckoning for the breach of it, he *regardeth not the rich more than the poor*, and therefore his priests, his ministers, *misrepresent* him, and do him a great deal of dishonour, if in doctrine or discipline they be *respecters of persons*. See *1 Tim. v. 21.* (3.) That they did a great deal of mischief to the souls of men, which they should have helped to save. *Ye have caused many to stumble at the law*, not only to *fall in the law*, as the margin reads it, by *transgressing* it, taught and encouraged to do so by the examples of the priests, but to *stumble at the law*, by contracting prejudices against it; as if the law were the minister of sin, and gave countenance to it. Thus Hophni and Phinehas, by their wickedness, *made the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred*, *1 Sam. ii. 17.* There are many to whom the law of God is a *stumbling-block*, the gospel of Christ a *savour of death unto death*, and Christ himself a *rock of offence*; and nothing contributes more to this, than the vicious lives of those that make a profession of religion, by which men are tempted to say, it is all a jest; this is properly a *scandal*, a stone of stumbling; there is no good reason it should be so to any, but *wo to those by whom this offence comes*. (4.) That when they were under the rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God for it, they *would not hear*, that is, they would not heed, they *would not lay it to heart*; they were not at all grieved or shamed for their sin, nor affected with the tokens of God's displeasure they were under; what we hear doth us no good, unless we *lay it to heart*, and admit the impressions of it. *Ye will not lay it to heart to give glory unto my name*, by repentance and reformation. Therefore we should *lay to heart* the things of God; that we may *give glory* to the name of God, may praise him in, and for, all that whereby he hath made himself known. It is bad in any to rob God of his honour, but worst in ministers, whose office and business it is to bear up his name, and to give him the glory due to it.

4. Here is a record of the judgments God had brought upon these priests for their profaneness, and their profanation of holy things. (1.) They had lost *their comfort*, ver. 2. *I have already cursed your blessings*; they had not the comfort of *their work*, which is the satisfaction of doing good; for the blessings with which they as priests blessed the people, God was so far from saying *amen* to, that he turned them into curses, as he did Balaam's curses into blessings, that *profane people* should not have the favour of receiving God's blessings, nor *those profane priests* the honour of conferring and conveying them, but both should lie under the tokens of his wrath; nor had they *the comfort of their wages*, for the blessings with which God blessed them were turned into a curse to them by their abuse of them; they could not receive them as the gifts of his favour when they had made themselves so obnoxious to his displeasure; by not *laying to heart* the reproofs given them. (2.) They had lost *their credit*, ver. 9. *Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people*; while they glorified God he dignified them, and supported their reputation, and a great interest they had in the love and esteem of the people, while they did their duty, and *walked with God in peace and equity*, every one had a value and veneration for them, they were truly styled *the reverend, the priests*, but when they for-

No. lxxviii.

took the ways of God, and corrupted the covenant of Levi, they thereby made themselves not only *mean* but *vile*, in the eyes even of the common people, who the more they honoured the order, the more they hated the men that were a dishonour to it. Their carriage, their miscarriage, had a direct tendency to this, and God owns his hand in it, and will have it looked upon as a just judgment of his upon them, and not only *produced* by their sin but *answering* to it; they put dishonour upon God and made *his table and the fruit thereof contemptible*, chap. i. 12. and therefore God justly put dishonour upon them, and made them *contemptible*; they exposed themselves, and therefore God exposed them. Note, Sin as it is a reproach to any people, so especially to priests, there is not a more despicable animal upon the face of the earth than a profane, wicked, scandalous minister.

5. Here is a *sentence of wrath passed upon them*, and this the prophet begins with, ver. 2, 3. But it is conditional, *if ye will not lay it to heart*; implying if you will, God's anger shall be turned away, and all shall be well; but if you persist in these wicked courses hear your doom; your sin will be your ruin. (1.) They shall fall and lie under the curse of God. *I will send a curse upon you*; the wrath of God shall be revealed against them, according to the threatenings of the written word. Note, They who violate the commands of the law, lay themselves under the curses of the law. (2.) Neither their employments, nor their enjoyments as priests shall be clean to them. *I will curse your blessings*, so that you shall neither be *blessed* your selves, nor *blessings* to the people; but even your plenty shall be a plague to you, and ye shall be plagues to your generation. (3.) The fruits of the earth which they had the tithe of should be no comfort to them. *Behold, I will corrupt your seed*, the corn you sow shall rot under ground, and never come up again; the consequence of which must needs be famine, and scarcity of provisions; so that no meat-offerings shall be brought to the altar, which the priests will soon have a loss of. Or, it may be understood of the *seed of the word*, which they preached; God threatens to deny his blessing, with the instructions they gave the people, so that their labour shall be lost, as that of the husbandman is, when the *seed is corrupt*; and so it agrees with that threatening, *Jer. xxiii. 32. They shall not profit this people at all.* (4.) They, and their services shall be rejected of God, he will be so far from taking any pleasure in them, that he will lothe and detest them, *I will spread dung in your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts*, i. e. of the sacrifices that were offered at those feasts, instead of being himself pleased with the fat of their sacrifices, he will shew himself displeased by throwing the *dung* of them in their faces, which he doth in effect when he saith, *bring no more vain oblations*, your *incense* is an *abomination* to me. Note, Those that rest in their external performances of religion, which they should count but *dung*, that they may win Christ, shall not only come short of acceptance with God in them, but shall be filled with shame and confusion for their folly. (5.) All will end at last in their utter ruin, *one shall take you away with it*, they shall be so overspread with the dung of their sacrifices, that they shall be *carried away* with it to the dunghil, as a part of it. Any one shall serve to take you away, the common scavenger; *reprobate silver shall men call them*, and treat them accordingly, *because the Lord has rejected them*.

10. Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? 11. ¶ Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. 12. The LORD will cut off the man that doth this: the master and the scholar out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts. 13. And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. 14. ¶ Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. 15. And did not he make one? yet had he the residue of the spirit: and wherefore one? that he might seek a godly seed: therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16. For the LORD the God of Israel saith, that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that you deal not treacherously. 17. ¶ Ye have wearied the LORD with your words: yet ye say,

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Wherein

Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doth evil, is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, where is the God of judgment?

Corrupt practices are the genuine fruit and product of corrupt principles; and the badness of mens hearts and lives is owing to some loose atheistical notions which they have got, and govern themselves by. Now in these verses we have an instance of this; we here find men *dealing falsely* with one another, and it is because they *think falsely* of their God. Observe,

1. How corrupt their practices were; in general they *dealt treacherously every man against his brother*, ver. 10. It cannot be expected, he that is false to his God should be true to his friend; they that deal treacherously with God and his tithes and offerings, and had defrauded him, and thus conscience was debauched, its bonds and cords broken, and a door opened to all manner of injustice and dishonesty, and the bonds of relation, and natural affection are broken thro' likewise, and no difficulty made of it. Some think the treacherous dealings here reproved are the same with those instances of oppression and extortion which we find complained of to Nehemiah about this time, *Neh. v. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7*. Therein they forgot the God of their fathers, and the covenant of their fathers, and rendered their offerings unacceptable, *Isa. i. 11*. But it seems rather to refer to what was amiss in their marriages, which was likewise complained of, *Neh. xiii. 23*.

Two things they are here charged with as very provoking to God in this matter; taking strange wives of heathen nations, and abusing and putting away the wives they had of their own nation, and in both these they *dealt treacherously*, and violated a sacred covenant; the former was in contempt of the covenant of peculiarity, the latter of the marriage-covenant.

(1.) In contempt of the covenant God made with Israel, as a peculiar people to himself, they *married strange wives*, which was expressly prohibited, and provided against in that covenant, *Deut. vii. 3*. Observe here,

1. What good reason they had to deal faithfully with God and one another in this covenant, and not to make marriages with the heathen. (1.) They were expressly bound out from such marriages by covenant, God engaged to do them good upon this condition, that they should not mingle themselves with the heathen; this was the *covenant of their fathers*, the covenant made with their fathers, noting the antiquity and the authority of it: and its being the great charter by which that nation was incorporated, they lay under all possible obligations to observe it strictly, and yet they profaned it, as if they were not bound by it. They *profane the covenant of their fathers*, who live in disobedience to the command of the God of their fathers. (2.) They were a peculiar people, united in one body, and therefore ought to have united for the preserving of the honour of their peculiarity. *Have we not all one Father?* Yes, we have, for *has not one God created us?* Are we not all his offspring? And are we not made of one blood? yes, certainly we are; God is a common father to all mankind, and upon that account *all we are brethren*, members one of another, and therefore ought to put away lying, *Eph. iv. 25*. and not to deal treacherously, *no not any man against his brother*. But here it seems to refer to the Jewish nation; *have we not all one father*, Abraham, or Jacob? This they prided themselves in, *We have Abraham to our father*, but here it is turned upon them as an aggravation of their sin in betraying the honour of their nation, by marrying with heathens; *bath not one God created us?* i. e. formed us into a people, made us a nation by ourselves, and put a life into us, distinct from that of other nations? And should not this oblige us to maintain the dignity of our character? Note, The consideration of the unity of the church in Christ, its founder and father, should engage us carefully to preserve the purity of the church, and to guard against all corruptions. (3.) They were dedicated to God, as well as distinguished from the neighbour nations. *Israel was holiness to the Lord*, *Jer. ii. 3*. taken into covenant with him, set apart by him, for himself, to be to him for a name, and a praise, and upon this account he loved them, and delighted in them; the sanctuary set up among them, was the holiness of the Lord, which he loved, of which he said, *it is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it*; but by their marrying strange wives, they profaned this holiness, and laid the honour of it in the dust. Note, Those that are devoted to God, and beloved of him, are concerned to preserve their integrity, that they may not throw themselves out of his love, nor lose the honour, or defeat the end of their dedication to him.

2. How treacherously they dealt notwithstanding. They *profaned themselves*, in that very thing which was prescribed to them for the preserving of the honour of their singularity. Judah has *married the daughter of a strange god*. The harm was not so much, that she was the daughter of a strange nation, God has made all nations of men, and is himself King of nations, but that she is the daughter of a strange god, trained up in the service and worship of false gods; and at their dispose, as a daughter at her father's dispose, and having a dependence upon them; hence some

of the Rabbins (quoted by Dr Pocock) say, *He that marries an heathen woman is, as if he made himself son-in-law to an idol*. It began the corruption of the old world, that the sons of God married the daughters of men, *Gen. vi. 2*. It is the same thing that is here complained of, but as it is expressed, it sounds worse, the sons of God married the daughters of a strange god. Herein Judah is said to have dealt treacherously, for they basely betrayed their own honour, and profaned that holiness of the Lord, which they should have loved; so some read it; and it is said to be an abomination committed in Israel, and in Jerusalem, it was hateful to God, and very unbecoming those that were called by his name. Note, It is an abominable thing for those that profess the holiness of the Lord, to profane it, particularly by yoking themselves unequally with unbelievers.

3. How severely God would reckon with them for it, ver. 12. *The Lord will cut off the man that doth this*; that marries the daughter of a strange god; he has in effect cut himself off from the holy nation, and joined in with foreigners, and aliens to the common-wealth of Israel, and so shall his doom be, *God will cut him off*; him and all that belong to him, so the original intimates. He shall be cut off from Israel and from Jerusalem, and not be written among the living there. The Lord will cut off both the master and the scholar, that is guilty of this sin; both the teachers and the taught, the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall together into the ditch; both him that wakeneth, and him that answereth, so it is in the margin, for the master calls up his scholar to his business, and stirs him up in it; they shall be cut off together, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, God will no more own them as belonging to his nation; nay, and the priest that offereth an offering to the Lord, if he marry a strange wife, (as we find many of the priests did, *Ezra x. 18*.) he shall not escape; the offering he offers shall not atone for him, but he shall be cut off from the temple of the Lord, as others from the tabernacles of Jacob. *Nehemiah chased away from him*, and from the priesthood, one of the sons of the high-priest, whom he found guilty of this sin, *Neh. xiii. 28*.

(2.) In contempt of the marriage-covenant, which God instituted for the common benefit of mankind, they abused and put away the wives they had of their own nation, probably to make room for those strange wives, when it was all the fashion to marry such, ver. 13. *This also have ye done*, this is the second article of the charge, for the way of sin is down-hill, and one violation of the covenant is an inlet to another.

1. Let us see what it is that is here complained of; they did not carry it as they ought to do towards their wives. (1.) They were cross with them, froward and peevish, and made their lives bitter to them; so that when they came with their wives and families to worship God, at the solemn feasts, which they should have done with rejoicing, they were all out of humour, the poor wives were ready to break their hearts, and not daring to make their case known to any other, they complained to God, and covered the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying. This is illustrated by the instance of Hannah, who upon the account of her husband's having another wife (though otherwise a kind husband) and the discontent thence arising, whenever they went up to the house of the Lord to worship, fretted and wept, and was in bitterness of soul, and would not eat, *1 Sam. i. 6, 7, 10*. So it was with these wives here; this was so contrary to the cheerfulness which God requires in his worshippers, that it spoiled the acceptableness of their devotions; God regardeth not their offering any more; see here what a good matter we serve, who will not have his altar covered with tears, but compassed with songs; which condemns those that left his worship for that of idols, among the rites of which, we find women weeping for Tammuz, *Ezek. viii. 14*. and the blood of the worshippers gushing out upon the altar, *1 Kings xviii. 28*. See also what an ill thing it is to put others out of frame, for the cheerful worship of God; though it is their fault by their fretfulness, to indispose themselves for their duty, yet it is much more their fault, that provoked them to make them to fret. It is a reason given, why yoke-fellows should live in holy love and joy; that their prayers may not be hindered, *1 Pet. iii. 7*. (2.) They dealt treacherously with them, ver. 14, 15, 16. They did not perform their promises to them, but defrauded them of their maintenance or dower, or took in concubines, to share in the affection that was due to their wives only. (3.) They put them away, gave them a bill of divorce, and turned them off, nay, perhaps they did it without the ceremony that the law of Moses prescribed, ver. 16. (4.) In all this they covered violence with their garment; they abused their wives, and were vexatious to them, and yet in the sight of others they pretended to be loving to them, and tender of them, and to cast a skirt over them. It is common for those that do violence, to advance some specious pretence or other, wherewith to cover it, as with a garment.

2. Let us see the proof and aggravations of the charge. (1.) It is sufficiently proved by the testimony of God himself; the Lord has been witness between thee, and the wife of thy youth, ver. 14. has been witness to the marriage-covenant between thee and her, for to him you appealed concerning your sincerity in it, and fidelity to it; he has been a witness to all the violations of it, and all thy treacherous dealings in contempt of it, and is ready to

to judge between thee and her. Note, This should engage us to be faithful both to God, and to all with whom we have to do, that God himself is a witness, both to all our covenants, and to all our covenant-breaches; and he is a witness against whom there lies no exception. (2.) It is highly aggravated, by the consideration of the person wronged and abused. (1.) She is *thy wife*; thy own, bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh; the nearest to thee of all the relations thou hast in the world, and to cleave to whom, thou must quit the rest. (2.) She is *the wife of thy youth*, i. e. who had thy affections when they were at the strongest, was thy first choice, and with whom thou hast lived long. Let not the darling of thy youth, be the scorn and loathing of thine age. (3.) She is *thy companion*, she has long been an equal sharer with thee in thy cares, and griefs, and joys. The wife is to be looked upon, not as a *servant*, but as a *companion* to the husband, with whom he should freely converse, and *take sweet counsel*, as with a friend, and in whose company he should take delight, more than in any others, for *is she not appointed to be thy companion?* (4.) She is *the wife of thy covenant*, to whom thou art so firmly bound, that while she continues faithful, thou canst not be loosed from her, for it was a covenant *for life*. It is the wife with whom thou hast *covenanted*, and who has *covenanted* with thee; there is an oath of God between you, which is not to be trifled with, is not to be played fast and loose with. Married people should oft call to mind their marriage-vows, and review them with all seriousness, as those that make conscience of performing what they *promised*.

3. Let us see the reasons given, why man and wife should continue together to their lives end, in holy love and peace, and neither quarrel with each other, nor part from each other. (1.) Because God has joined them together. *Ver. 15. Did not he make one?* one Eve for one Adam, that Adam might never take another to her to vex her, Lev. xviii. 18. nor put her away to make room for another; it is great wickedness to complain of the law of marriage as a confinement, when Adam in innocency, in honour, in Eden, in the garden of pleasure, was *confined to one*. Yet God had the residue of the spirit, he could have made another Eve, as amiable as that he did make, but designing Adam a helpmeet for him, he made him *one wife*; had he made him more, he had not had a meet help. And wherefore did he make but one woman for one man? It was *that he might seek a godly seed, a seed of God*, so the word is, a seed that should bear the image of God, be employed in the service of God, and be devoted to his glory and honour; that *every man having his own wife*, and *but one* according to the law, 1 Cor. vii. 2. they might live in chaste and holy love, under the directions and restraints of the divine law, and not as brute beasts under the dominion of lust, and thus might propagate the nature of man in such a way, as might make it most likely to participate of a divine nature; that the children being born in *holy matrimony*, which is an ordinance of God, and by which the inclinations of nature are kept under the regulations of God's command, might thus be made a *seed to serve him*, and be *bred*, as they are *born*, under his direction, and dominion. Note, The raising up of a *godly seed*, which shall be *accounted to the Lord for a generation*, is one great end of the institution of marriage, but that is a good reason why the *marriage-bed* should be kept *undefiled*, and the *marriage-bond* inviolable. Husbands and wives must therefore live in the fear of God, that their seed may be a *godly seed*; else were they *unclean*, but *now are they holy, as children of the covenant*, the marriage-covenant, which was a type of the covenant of grace, and the conjugal union, when thus preserved, entire of the mystical union between Christ and his church, in which he seeks and secures to himself a *godly seed*, see Eph. v. 25, 32. (2.) Because he is much displeased with those who go about to *put asunder what he has joined together*. *ver. 16. The God of Israel saith, he hateth putting away*. He had indeed permitted it to the Jews, for the hardness of their hearts, or rather limited and clogged it, *Mat. xix. 8. but he hated it*, especially as they practised it, who *put away their wives for every cause*, *Mat. xix. 3.* Let those wives that *elope* from their husbands, and *put themselves away*, those husbands that are cruel to their wives, and *turn them away*, or take their affections off their wives, and place them upon others, yea and those husbands and wives that live asunder by consent, for want of love to each other, let such as these know that the *God of Israel* hates such practices, however *vain men* may make a jest of them.

4. Let us see the caution inferred from all this. We have it twice, *ver. 15. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth*, and again, *ver. 16. Note, They that would be kept from sin, must take heed to their spirits*, for there all sin begins; they must keep their hearts with all diligence; must keep a jealous eye upon them, and a strict hand, and must watch against the first risings of sin there. We shall *act* as we are *spirited*, and therefore that we may regulate our actions, we must consider *what manner of spirit we are of*; we must *take heed to our spirits*, with reference to our particular relations, and see that we stand rightly affected to them, and be of a good temper, for otherwise we shall be in danger of *dealing treacherously*. If our own hearts deal treacherously with us, whom will they not deal treacherously with?

2. Observe how corrupt their principles were, to which was owing all these corrupt practices. Let us run up the streams to the fountain. *Ver. 17. Ye have wearied the Lord with your words*; they thought to evade the convictions of the word, and to justify themselves by cavilling with God's proceedings, but their defence was their offence, and their vindication of themselves, was the aggravation of their crime; they affronted the Lord with their words, and repeated them so often, and persisted so long in their contradictions, that they even *wearied him*; see *Isa. vii. 13.* they made him weary of doing them good as he had done, and stopped the current of his favours; or, they represented him as weary of governing the world, and willing to quit it, and lay aside the care of it. Note, It is a wearisome thing, even to God himself, to hear people insist upon their own justification, in their corrupt and wicked practices, and to plead their atheistical principles in vindication of them. But as if God by his prophet had done them wrong, see how impudently they ask, *Wherein have we wearied him?* What are those vexatious words whereby we have wearied him? Note, Sinful words are more offensive to the God of Heaven, than they are commonly thought to be. But God has his proofs ready; two things they had said, at least in their hearts, (and thoughts are words to God) with which they had *wearied him*. (1.) They had denied him to be a *holy God*, and had asserted that concerning him, which is directly contrary to the doctrine of his holiness; as he is a holy God he hates sin, *is of purer eyes than to behold it*, and *cannot endure to look upon it*, Hab. i. 13. He is *not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness*, Psal. v. 4. and yet they had the impudence to say, in direct contradiction to this, *Every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them*. This wicked inference they drew without any reason, from the prosperity of sinners in their sinful courses, see *chap. iii. 15.* as if God's love or hatred were to be known by that which is before us, and these must be concluded *good in the sight of the Lord*, that are rich in the world. Or, this they say, because they wished it might be so, they were resolved to *do evil*, and yet to think themselves *good in the sight of the Lord*, and to believe that *he delighted in them* notwithstanding; and therefore, under pretence of making God not so severe as he was commonly represented, they said as they would have it, and thought he was *altogether such a one as themselves*. Note, Those who think God a friend to sin, affront him, and deceive themselves. (2.) They had denied him to be *the righteous governor of the world*. If he did not delight in sin and sinners, yet it would serve their turn to believe, that he would never punish it or them. They said, *Where is the God of judgment?* That God that we have been so often told would call us to an account, and reckon with us for what we have said and done, where is he? He hath forsaken the earth, and takes no notice of what is said and done there; he hath said he will *come to judgment*, but *where is the promise of his coming?* We may do what we please, he sees us not, nor will regard us; it is such a challenge to the Judge of the whole earth, as bids defiance to his justice, and, in effect, dares him to *do his worst*. Such scoffers as these there were in the *latter days* of the Jewish church, and such there shall be in the *latter days* of the Christian church; but their unbelief shall not make the promise of God of none effect; for the day of the Lord will come; behold, the Judge standeth before the door; the God of judgment is *at hand*.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter we have, (1) *A promise of the coming of the Messiah, and of his fore-runner, and the errand he comes upon is here particularly described, both the comfort which his coming brings to his church and people, and the terror it will bring to the wicked*, *ver. 1—6.* (2.) *A reproof of the Jews, for their corrupting of God's ordinances, and sacrilegious robbing him of his dues; with a charge to them to amend this matter, and a promise that if they did, God would return in mercy to them*, *ver. 7—12.* (3.) *A description of the wickedness of the wicked that speak against God*, *ver. 13—15.* And of the righteousness of the righteous that speak for him, with the precious promises made to them, *ver. 16—18.*

1. **B**Ehold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple: even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. 2. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiners fire, and like fullers sope. 3. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. 4. Then shall the

the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. 5. And I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the forcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts. 6. For I am the LORD, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

The first words of this chapter seem a direct answer to the profane, atheistical demand of the scoffers of those days which closed the foregoing chapter, *where is the God of judgment?* To which it is readily answered, here he is; he is just at the door; the long expected Messiah is ready to appear; and he saith, *for judgment am I come into this world*; for that judgment which you so impudently bid defiance to. One of the rabbins saith, the meaning of this is, That God will raise up a righteous king, to set things in order, even *the king Messiah*. And the *beginning of the gospel of Christ*, is expressly said to be the accomplishment of this promise, with which the Old Testament concludes, *Mark* i. 1, 2. So that by this the two testaments are, as it were, tacked together, and made to answer one another. Now here we have,

1. A prophecy of the appearing of his fore-runner John the Baptist, which the prophet Isaiah had foretold, *chap.* xl. 3. as the *preparing of the way of the Lord*, to which this here seems to have a reference, for the words of the latter prophets confirmed those of the former. *Behold, I will send my messenger, or I do send him, or I am sending him*, I am determined to send him, he will now shortly come, and will not come *unsent*, though to a careless generation he comes *unsent for*. Observe (1.) He is *God's messenger*; that is his office; he is Malachi, so the word is, the same with the name of this prophet; he is *my angel*, *my ambassador*; John Baptist had his commission *from heaven*, and not of men: All held John Baptist for a prophet, for he was God's messenger, as the prophets were, and came on the same errand to the world that they were sent upon, to call men to repentance and reformation. (2.) He is *Christ's harbinger*. He shall *prepare the way before me*; by calling men to those duties, which qualify them to receive the comforts of the Messiah and his coming; and by taking them off from a confidence, in their relation to Abraham as *their father*, which they thought would serve their turn without a saviour; and by giving notice that the Messiah was now at hand, and so raising mens expectations of him, and making them readily to go into the measures he would take for the setting up of his kingdom in the world. Note, God observes a method in his work, and before he comes takes care to have his way prepared. This is like the giving of a sign; the church was told long before that the Messiah would come; and here it is added, that by the same token, a little before he appears there shall be a signal given; a great prophet shall arise that shall give notice of his approach, and call to the everlasting gates and doors to *lift up their heads*, and give him admission. The accomplishment of this is a proof that *Jesus is the Christ*; is he that *should come*, and we are to *look for no other*; for there was such a messenger sent before him, who *made ready a people prepared for the Lord*, *Luke* i. 17. The Jewish writers run themselves into gross absurdities, to evade the conviction of this evidence; some of them say, this messenger is the *angel of death*, who shall take the wicked out of this life, to be sent into hell-torments; others of them say, it is Messiah the son of Joseph, who shall appear before Messiah the son of David; others this prophet himself; others an angel from heaven; such mistakes do they run into, that will not receive the truth.

2. A prophecy of the appearing of the Messiah himself. *The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple*, even the *God of judgment*, who, ye think, has forsaken the earth, and you *wot not what is become of him*. The Messiah has been long called *he that should come*, and you may assure yourselves that now shortly he *will come*. (1.) He is *the Lord*. Adonai, the basis and foundation, on which the world is founded and fastened; the ruler and governour of all; that one *Lord over all*, *Acts* x. 36. that hath all power committed to him, *Mat.* xxviii. 18. and is to *reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, *Luke* i. 33. (2.) He is the *messenger of the covenant*; or, the *angel of the covenant*, that *blessed one that was sent from heaven to negotiate a peace*, and settle a correspondence between God and man. He is the *angel*, the *archangel*, the Lord of the angels, who received commission from the Father to bring man home to God by a covenant of grace, who had revolted from him by the violation of the covenant of innocency. Christ is the *angel of this covenant*, by whose mediation it is brought about and established, as God's covenant with Israel was made by the *disposition of angels*, *Acts* vii. 54. *Gal.* iii. 14. Christ, as a prophet, is the *messenger and mediator* of the covenant, nay, he is *given for a covenant*, *Isa.* xlix. 8. That *covenant*, which is all our *salvation*, *began to be spoken by the Lord*, *Heb.* ii. 3. Tho' he is the *prince of the covenant*, as some read this here,

yet he condescended to be the *messenger of it*; that we might have full assurance of God's good-will towards man upon his word. (3.) He is *whom ye seek, whom ye delight in*; whom the pious Jews expect and desire, and whose coming they think of with a great deal of pleasure. In looking and waiting for him, they *looked for redemption in Jerusalem*, and *waited for the consolation of Israel*, *Luke* ii. 25, 38. Christ was to be the *desire of all nations*, desirable to all, *Hag.* ii. 7. But he was *the desire* of the Jewish nation actually, because they had the promise of his coming made to them. Note, Those that *seek Jesus* shall find *pleasure in him*: If he be our *heart's desire*, he will be our *heart's delight*; and we have reason to *delight in him* who is the *messenger of the covenant*, and to bid him welcome who came to us on so kind an errand. (4.) He shall *suddenly come*; his coming draws nigh, and we see it not at so great a distance as the patriarchs saw it at; or, he shall come immediately after the appearing of John Baptist; shall even tread on the heels of his forerunner; when that *morning-star* appears, believe that the *sun of righteousness* is not far off. Or, he shall come *suddenly*, i. e. he shall come when by many he is not looked for; as his second coming will be, so his first coming was, *at midnight*, when some had done looking for him, *for shall he find faith on the earth?* *Luke* xviii. 8. The Jews reckon the Messiah among the things that come *unawares*; so Dr Pocock. And the coming of the Son of man, in his day, is said to be *as the lightning*, which is very surprising, *Luke* xvii. 24. (5.) He shall come *to his temple*, this temple at Jerusalem which was lately built, that *latter house* which he was to be the *glory of*. It is his temple, for it is *his Father's house*, *John* ii. 16. Christ at forty days old, was presented in the temple, and thither Simeon went *by the Spirit*, according to the direction of this prophecy to see him, *Luke* ii. 27. At twelve years old he was in the temple *about his Father's business*, *Luke* ii. 49. When he rode in triumph into Jerusalem, it should seem, he went directly *to the temple*, *Mat.* xxi. 12. and *ver.* 14. thither the *blind* and the *lame* came to him to be *healed*; there he often preached, and often disputed, and often wrought miracles. By this it appears, that the Messiah was to come while *that temple* was standing, that therefore being long since destroyed, we must conclude that he is come, and we are to look for no other. Note, Those that would be acquainted with Christ and obtain his favour, must meet him in his temple, for there he *records his name*, and there he will *bless* his people. There we must *receive his oracles*, and there we must *pay our homage*. (6.) The promise of his coming is repeated and ratified, *Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts*; you may depend upon his word who cannot lye, *he shall come, he will come, he will not tarry*.

3. An account given of the great ends and intentions of his coming, *ver.* 2. He is one whom they *seek*, and one whom they *delight in*, and yet *who may abide the day of his coming?* It is a thing to be thought of with great seriousness, and with a holy awe and reverence; for *who shall stand when he appeareth?* Tho' he comes not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might have life. This may refer (1.) To the *terrors of his appearance*. Even in the days of his flesh there were some emanations of his glory and power, such as none could stand before, witness his transfiguration, and the prodigies that attended his death; and we read of divers that trembled before him, as *Mark* v. 33. (2.) To the *troublesome times* that should follow soon after. The Jewish doctors speak of the *pangs* or *griefs* of the Messiah, meaning (they say) the great afflictions that should be to Israel at the time of his coming; he himself speaks of great tribulation then approaching, *such as was not since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be*, *Mat.* xxiv. 21. (3.) To the *trial* which his coming would make of the children of men. He shall be *like a refiner's fire*, which separates between the gold and the dross, by melting the ore, or, *like fuller's soap*, which with much rubbing fetcheth the spots out of the cloth. Christ came to *discover men, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed*, *Luke* ii. 35. to *distinguish men*, to separate between the precious and the vile, for *his fan is in his hand*, *Mat.* iii. 12. to *send fire on the earth, not peace, but rather division*, *Luke* xii. 49, 51. to *shake heaven and earth*, that the *wicked* might be *shaken out*, *Job* xxxviii. 13. and that the *things which cannot be shaken, might remain*, *Heb.* xii. 27. See what the effect of the trial will be, that shall be made by the gospel.

(1.) The gospel shall *work good* upon those that are *disposed to be good*; to them it shall be a favour of life unto life, *ver.* 3. *He shall sit as a refiner*; Christ by his gospel shall purify and reform his church, and by his Spirit working with it shall regenerate and cleanse particular souls; for to this end he gave himself for the church, *that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*, *Eph.* v. 26. and *purify to himself a peculiar people*, *Tit.* ii. 14. Christ is the great refiner. Observe, (1.) Who they are that he will purify; *the sons of Levi*, i. e. all those that are devoted to his praise, and employed in his service, as the tribe of Levi was, and whom he designs to make *unto our God* spiritual priests, *Rev.* i. 6. a *holy priesthood*, *1 Pet.* ii. 5. Note, All true Christians are *sons of Levi*; set apart for God, to do the service of his sanctuary, and to *war the good warfare*. (2.) How he will purify them; he will *purge them as gold and silver*, i. e. he will sanctify them inwardly; will not only

only wash away the spots they have contracted from without, but will take away the dross that is found in them; will separate from them their indwelling corruptions which rendered their faculties worthless and useless, and so make them like gold refined, both *valuable* and *serviceable*. He will purge them with fire, as gold and silver are purged, for he baptizeth with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, Mat. iii. 11. with the Holy Ghost, working like fire. He will purge them by *afflictions and manifold temptations*, that the trial of their faith might be found to praise and honour, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. He will purge them so as to make them a precious people to himself. (3.) What will be the effect of it; that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, i. e. that they may be in sincerity converted to God, and consecrated to his praise; hence we read of the offering up, or sacrificing of the Gentiles to God, when they were sanctified by the Holy Ghost, Rom. xv. 16. and that they may in a spiritual manner worship God according to his will; may offer the sacrifices of righteousness, Psal. iv. 5. the offering of prayer and praise, and holy love; that they may be the true worshippers, who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, John iv. 23, 24. Note, We cannot offer unto the Lord any right performances in religion, unless our persons be justified and sanctified. Till we ourselves be refined and purified by the grace of God, we cannot do any thing that will redound to the glory of God; God had respect to Abel first, and then to his offering; and therefore God purgeth his people, that they may offer their offerings to him in righteousness, Zeph. iii. 9. He therefore makes the tree good, that the fruit may be good. And then it follows, ver. 4. The offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasant unto the Lord. It shall no longer be offensive as it has been, when in the former days they worshipped other gods with the God of Israel, or when in the present days they brought the torn, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice, but it shall be acceptable, he will be pleased with the offerers, and their offerings, as in the days of old, and as in former years; as in the primitive times of the church, as when God had respect to Abel's sacrifice, and smelled a savour of rest from Noah's, and when he kindled Aaron's sacrifice with fire from heaven. When the Messiah comes, (1.) He will, by his grace in them, make them acceptable; when he has purified and refined them, then they shall offer such sacrifices as God requires and will accept. (2.) He will, by his intercession for them, make them accepted; he will recommend them and their performances to God, so that their prayers, being perfumed with the incense of his intercession, shall be pleasant unto the Lord; for he hath made us accepted in the beloved, and in him is well pleased, with those that are in him, Mat. iii. 17. and bring forth fruit in him. (2.) It shall turn for a testimony, against those that are resolved to go on in their wickedness, ver. 5. This is the direct answer to their challenge, Where is the God of judgment? You shall know where he is, and shall know it to your terror and confusion, for I will come near to you to judgment; to you that set divine justice at defiance; to them the gospel of Christ will be a savour of death unto death; it will bind them over to condemnation, and will judge them in the great day, John xii. 48. Let us see here (1.) Who the sinners are, that must appear to be judged by the gospel of Christ. They are the *forerers*, that deal in spiritual wickedness, that forsake the oracles of the God of truth, to consult the father of lies. And the *adulterers* that wallow in the lusts of the flesh, those adulterers that were charged with *dealing treacherously*, Mal. ii. 15. And the *false swearers*, who profane God's name, and affront his justice, by calling him to witness to a lye; and the oppressors that barbarously injure, and upon those that lie at their mercy, and are not able to help themselves; they defraud the hireling in his wages, and will not give him what he agreed for; they crush the widow and fatherless, and will not pay them their just debts, because they cannot prove them, or have not wherewithal to sue for them; the poor stranger too, that has no friend to stand by him, and is ignorant of the laws of the country, they turn aside from his right, so that he cannot keep, or cannot recover his own. And that which is at the bottom of all this is, they fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. The transgression of the wicked plainly declares it, that there is no fear of God before his eyes; where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. (2.) Who will appear against them; I will come near, saith God, and will be a swift witness against them. They justify themselves, and their sins having been artfully concealed, hope to escape punishment, for want of proof; but God, who sees and knows all things, will himself be witness against them, and his omniscience is instead of a thousand witnesses, for to it the sinner's own conscience shall be made to subscribe, and so every mouth shall be stopped; he will be a swift witness; though they reflect upon him as slow and dilatory, and ask, Where is the God of judgment, and where the promise of his coming? They will find that he is not slack concerning his threatnings, no more than he is concerning his promises. Judgment against those sinners shall not be put off, for want of evidence, for he will be a swift witness. His judgment shall overtake them, and it shall be impossible for them to out-run it. Evil pursues sinners.

4. The ratification of all this, ver. 6. For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Here we No. lxxviii.

have, (1.) God's immutability asserted by himself, and gloried in, I am the Lord, I change not, and therefore no word that I have spoken shall fall to the ground; is God a just revenger of those that rebel against him? Is he the bountiful rewarder of those that diligently seek him? in both these he is *unchangeable*. Tho' the sentence passed against evil works, ver. 5. be not executed speedily, yet it will be executed, for he is the Lord, he changeth not, he is as much an enemy to sin as ever he was, and impenitent sinners will find him so. There needs no *scire facias* to revive God's judgment, for it is never antiquated, or out of date, but against those that go on still in their trespasses, the curse of his law still remains in full force, power, and virtue. (2.) A particular proof of it, from the comfortable experience which the people of Israel had had of it; they had reason to say he was an *unchangeable* God, for he had been faithful to his covenant with them and their fathers; if he had not stuck to that, they had been consumed long ago, and cut off from being a people; they had been false and fickle in their carriage to him, and he might justly have abandoned them, and then they had soon been consumed and ruined; but because he remembered his covenant, and would not violate that, nor alter the thing that was gone forth out of his lips, they were preserved from ruin, and recovered from the brink of it. It was purely because he would be as good as his word, Deut. vii. 8. Lev. xxvi. 42. Now as God had kept them from ruin, while the covenant of peculiarity remained in force, purely because he would be faithful to that covenant, and would shew, that he is not a man that he should lye, Numb. xxiii. 19. so when that covenant shall be superseded, and set aside by the New Testament, and they, by rejecting the blessings of it, lay themselves open to the curses, he will shew that in the determinations of his wrath, as well as in those of his mercy, he is not a man that he should repent; but will then be as true to his threatnings, as hitherto he has been to his promises, see 1 Sam. xv. 29. We may all apply this very sensibly to ourselves; because we have to do with a God that changeth not, therefore it is that we are not consumed, even because his compassions fail not, they are new every morning, great is his faithfulness, Lam. iii. 22, 23.

7. ¶ Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them: return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts: but ye said, Wherein shall we return? 8. ¶ Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me: but ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me even this whole nation. 10. Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruits before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. 12. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the LORD of hosts.

We have here God's controversy with the men of that generation, for deserting his service, and robbing him; wicked servants indeed, that not only run away from their master, but run away with their master's goods.

1. They had run away from their master, and quitted the work he gave them to do, ver. 7. Ye have gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. The ordinances of God's worship were the business, which as servants they must mind, the talents they must trade with, and the trust which was committed to them to keep; but they went away from them; grew weary of them, and withdrew their neck from that yoke; they deviated from the rule that God had prescribed to them, and betrayed the trust lodged with them; they had revolted from God, not only in worship, but in conversation; they had not kept his ordinances. This disobedience they were chargeable with, and had been guilty of, even from the days of their fathers; either as in the days of their fathers of old, who were sent into captivity for their disobedience; or now for some generations past you are fallen off from what you were, when first you came back out of captivity. Ezra owns it in one particular instance, since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day, Ezra ix. 7. Now observe, (1.) What a gracious invitation God gives them to return and repent, return unto me, and to your duty, return to your service, return to your allegiance, return as a traveller that has missed his way, as a soldier that has run his colours, as a treacherous wife that has gone away from her husband; return thou backsliding Israel, return to me; and then I will return unto you, and be reconciled; will remove the judgments you are under,

and prevent those you fear. This had been of old the burden of the song, *Zech. i. 3.* and is still. (2.) What a peevish answer they return to this gracious invitation; *but ye said with disdain, said it to the prophets that called you, said it to one another, said it to your own hearts, to stifle the convictions you were under, you said wherein shall we return?* Note, God takes notice what returns our hearts make to the calls of his word; what we say, and what we think, when we have heard a sermon; what answer we give to the message sent us: When God calls us to *return*, we should answer as they did, *Jer. iii. 22. Behold, we come.* But not as these here, *wherein shall we return?* (1.) They take it as an affront to be *told of their faults*, and called upon to amend them; are ready to say, what ado do these prophets make, about *returning and repenting*; why are we disgraced and disturbed thus, our own consciences and our neighbours stirred up against us? It is ill with those who thus count reproofs reproaches, and *kick against the pricks.* (2.) They are so ignorant of themselves, and of the strictness, extent, and spiritual nature of the divine law, that they see nothing in themselves to be *repented of, or reformed*; they are pure in their own eyes, and think they need no repentance. (3.) They are so firmly resolved to go on in sin, that they will find a thousand foolish frivolous excuses to shift off their repentance, and turn away the calls that are given them to repent. They seem to speak only as those that wanted something to say; it is a mere evasion, a banter upon the prophet, and a challenge to him to descend to particulars. Note, Many ruin their own souls, by *baffling* the calls that are given them to repent of their sins.

2. They had robbed their *master*, and embezzled his goods. They had asked *wherein shall we return?* What have we done amiss? And he soon tells them. Observe,

1. The prophet's high charge exhibited in God's name, against the people, they stand indicted for robbery, or sacrilege, the worst of robberies; *ye have robbed me.* And he expostulates with them upon it, *will a man be so daringly impudent as to rob God?* Man that is a weak creature, and cannot contend with God's power; will he think to rob him, *vi & armis*? Man that lies open to God's knowledge, and cannot conceal himself from that, will he think to rob him, *clam & secreto*? Man that depends upon God, and derives his all from him, will he rob him that is his benefactor? This is ungrateful, unjust, and unkind indeed, and very unwise thus to provoke him, from whom our judgment proceeds. *Will a man do violence to God?* So some read it; *will a man stint or straiten him?* So others read it. Robbing God is a heinous crime.

2. The peoples high challenge in answer to that charge. *But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee?* They plead *not guilty*, and put God upon the proof of it. Note, Robbing God is such a heinous crime, that they who are guilty of it, are not willing to own themselves guilty. They rob God, and *know not what they do.* They rob him of his honour, rob him of that which is devoted to him, to be employed in his service; rob him of themselves, rob him of sabbath-time; rob him of that which is given for the support of religion, and give him not his dues out of their estates, and yet they ask, *wherein have we robbed thee?*

3. The plain proof of the charge, in answer to this challenge; it is in *tithes and offerings.* Out of these the priests and Levites had maintenance for themselves and their families, but they *detained* them, *defrauded* the priests of them, would not pay their tithes, or not *in full*, or not *of the best*; they brought not the offerings which God required, or brought the *torn, and lame, and sick*, which was not fit for use. They were all guilty of this sin, even *the whole nation*, as if they were in confederacy against God, and all combined to rob him of his dues, and to *stand by one another in it*, when they had done. For this they were *curst with a curse*, ver. 9. God punished them with famine and scarcity, through unseasonable weather, or insects that eat up the fruits of the earth. God had thus punished them, for neglecting to build the temple, *Hag. i. 10, 11.* and now for not maintaining the temple-service. Note, Those that deny God's part of their estates, may justly expect a *curse* upon their own part of them. *Ye are curst with a curse* for robbing me, and yet ye go on to do it. Note, It is a great aggravation of sin, when men persist in it, notwithstanding the rebukes of providence they are under for it. Nay, It should seem, because God had punished them with scarcity of bread, they made that a pretence for robbing him; that now they were *impoverished*, they could not afford to bring their *tithes and offerings*, but must *save them*, that they might have bread for their families. Note, It argues great perverseness in sin, when men make those Afflictions excuses for sin, which are sent to part between them and their sins. When they had but little, they should have done the more good with that little, and that would have been the way to have made it more; but it is ill with the patient, when that which should *cure* the disease, serves only to *palliate* it, and prevent its being searched into.

4. An earnest exhortation to reform in this matter; with a promise, that if they did, the judgments they were under should be presently removed.

1. Let them take care to do their duty, ver. 10. *Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house.* They had brought some, but, like

Ananias and Sapphira, had *kept back part of the price*, pretending they could not spare so much as was required, and *necessity has no law*; but even necessity must have *this* law, and it would redress the grievance of their necessity; bring in the full tithes, to the utmost that the law requires, *that there may be meat in God's house*, for them that serve at the altar, whether there be meat in your houses or no. Note, God must be served in the first place, and our quota must be contributed for the support of religion, in the place where we live, that God's name may be sanctified, and his kingdom may come, and his will be done, even before we provide our *daily bread*, for the interests of our souls ought to be preferred before those of our bodies.

2. Let them then trust God to provide for them and their comfort. Let God be first served, and then *prove me herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, whether I will not open the windows of heaven.* They said, let God give us our plenty again as formerly, and try us whether we will not then bring him his tithes and offerings, as we did formerly; no, saith God, do you first bring in all your tithes as they become due, and all the arrears of what is past, and try me, whether I will not then restore you your plenty. Note, Those that will deal with God, must *deal upon trust*, and we may all venture to do so, for though many have been losers *for him*, never any were losers by him in the end. It is fit we should *venture first*, for his reward is *with him*, but his work is *before him*; we must first do the work which is *our part*, and then *try him*, and trust him for the reward. Elijah put the widow of Zarephath into this method, when he said, *1 Kings xvii. 13. Make me a little cake first, and then prove me, whether there shall not be enough afterwards for thee and thy son.* That which discourages people from the expences of charity, is the weakness of their faith concerning the gains and advantages of charity, they cannot think that they shall get by it, but it is a reasonable demand that God here makes, *prove me now*; is any thing to be got by charity? *Come and see*; Nothing venture, nothing win. Trust upon honour,

And you shall find (1.) That whereas the heavens have been shut up, and there has been no rain, now God will *open* to you the *windows of heaven*, for in his hand the key of the clouds is, and you shall have seasonable rain. Or, the expression is figurative, every good gift coming from above, thence God will plentifully pour out upon them the bounties of his providence, very sudden plenty is expressed by *opening the windows of heaven*, *2 Kings vii. 2.* We find the *windows of heaven opened*, to pour down a deluge of wrath, in Noah's flood, *Gen. vii. 11.* But here they are opened to *pour down blessings* to that degree, that there should not be *room enough to receive* them. So plentifully shall their ground bring forth, that they shall be tempted to *pull down their barns and build greater*, for want of room, *Luke xii. 18.* Or, as Dr Pocock explains it, "I will pour out on you such a blessing, as shall be not *to enough only*, and such as shall be *sufficient, but more, and more than enough*;" that is, a great addition; the oil that is multiplied shall not stay, as long as there are vessels to receive it, *2 Kings iv. 6.* Note, God will not only be reconciled to sinners that repent and reform, but he will be a benefactor, a bountiful benefactor to them. We are never straitened in him, but often straitened in our own bosoms; God has blessings ready to bestow upon us, but through the weakness of our faith, and narrowness of our desires, we have not *room to receive* them. (2.) That whereas the fruits of their ground had been eaten up by locusts and caterpillars, God would now remove that judgment, ver. 11. *I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes*, and will check the progress of those destroying animals, that they shall no more destroy the products of the earth, and the fruits of the trees, God has all creatures at his beck, can command them and remand them, at his pleasure. *Neither shall the vine cast her fruit before the time*; it shall not be blatted, or blown off. Or, as some read it, *neither shall the devourer make your vine barren*, as the locusts did, *Joel i. 7.* (3.) That whereas their neighbours had upbraided them with their scarcity, and they had lain under the *reproach of famine*, which was the more grievous, because their country used to be boasted of for its plenty, now *all nations shall call them blessed*, shall speak honourably of them, and own them to be a happy people. (4.) That whereas their sin had made their land *unpleasing* to God, even their temple, and altars, and offerings were so, chap. ii. 13. and whereas his judgments had made their land *unpleasant* to them, and very melancholy, now *ye shall be a delightful land*, your country shall be acceptable to God, and comfortable to yourselves. Note, The reviving religion in a land, will make it indeed a *delightful land*, both to God, and to all good people; he will say, *it is my rest for ever, here will I dwell*, and they will say the same, *Isa. lxii. 4. Deut. xi. 12.* It should seem, this charge, to *bring in the tithes* had its good effect, for we find *Neb. xiii. 12.* that *all Judah did bring in their tithe into the treasures*, and no doubt they had the benefit of these promises in the return of their plenty, immediately upon their return to their duty; that they might plainly discern for what cause the evil had been upon them, for when the *cause* was removed, the *evil* was removed; and that they may see how perfectly reconciled God was to them upon their repentance; and how their transgression was remembered no more,

for the curse was not only taken away, but turned into an abundant blessing.

13. ¶ Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD: yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? 14. Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? 15. And now we call the proud happy: yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God, are even delivered. 16. ¶ Then they that feared the LORD, spake often one to another, and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. 17. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. 18. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.

Among the people of the Jews at this time, though they all enjoyed the same privileges and advantages, yet there were men of very different characters, as ever were, and ever will be in the world, and in the church, like Jeremiah's figs, some very good, and others very bad; some that plainly appeared to be the children of God, and others that as plainly discovered themselves to be the children of the wicked one; there are tares and wheat in the same field, chaff and corn in the same floor; and here we have an account of both.

1. Here is the angry notice God takes of the impudent, blasphemous talk of the sinners in Zion, and his just resentments of it. Probably there was a club of them that were in league against religion, that set up for wits, and set their wits on work to run it down, and ridicule it, and herein strengthened one another's hands.

Here is, (1.) An indictment found against them, for treasonable words spoke against the King of kings. *Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord.* They spoke against God, in reflexion upon him, in contradiction to him, as their fathers in the wilderness, Psal. lxxviii. 19. *Yea, they spake against God.* What he said, and what he designed they opposed, as if they had been retained of counsel against him and his cause. Their words against God were stout, they came from their pride and haughtiness, and contempt of God. What they said against God, they spoke it loudly, as if they cared not who heard them, they were not themselves ashamed to say it, and they desired to propagate their atheistical notions, and to infect the minds of others with them. They spoke it boldly, as those that were resolved to stand to it, and were in no fear of being called to an account. They spoke it proudly, and with insolence and disdain, scorning to be under the divine check and government. They strengthen themselves, they would be valiant against the Almighty, Job xv. 25.

(2.) Their plea to this indictment. They said, *What have we spoken so much against thee?* They deny the words, and put the prophet to prove them; or if they spoke the words, they did not design them against God, and therefore will not own there was any harm in them; at least they extenuate the matter, *What have we spoken so much against thee?* So much that there needs all this ado about it. They cannot deny but that they have spoken against God, but they make a light matter of it, and wonder it should be taken notice of; *words (say they) are but wind;* others have said more; and done worse; if they be not so good as they should be, yet they hope they are not so bad as they are represented to be. Note, It is common for sinners, that are unconvinced, and unhumiliated, to deny or extenuate the faults they are justly charged with; and to insist upon their own justification, against the reproofs of the word, and of their own consciences. But it will be to no purpose.

(3.) The words themselves they are charged with. God keeps an account of what men say, as well as of what they do, and will let them know that he doth so. We presently forget what we have said, and are ready to deny what we have said amiss, but God can say, *ye have said so and so.* They had said it as their deliberate judgment, (1.) That there is nothing to be got in the service of God, though it is a service that subjects men to labour and sorrow. They said, *It is vain to serve God,* or, *He is vain that serveth God,* i. e. he labours in vain, and to no purpose; he has his labour for his pains, and therefore is a fool for his labour; *what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, or his observation?* That we have observed what he has appointed us to observe. *What mammon, or wealth have we gained,* saith the Chaldee; intimating (saith Dr Pocock) that it was for mammon's sake only, that they served God, and so in-

deed not God at all, but mammon. We have walked mournfully, or in black, with great gravity, and great grief, before the Lord of hosts, have afflicted our souls, at the times appointed for that purpose; and yet we are never the better. Perhaps this comes in as a reason why they would not trust God to prosper them upon their bringing in the tithes, ver. 10. for, say they, we have tried him in other things, and have lost by him; this is a very unjust and unreasonable reflexion upon the service of God, and we can call witnesses enough to confront the slander. (1.) They would have it thought that they had served God, and had kept his ordinances, whereas it was only the external observance of them, that they had kept up while they were perfect strangers to the inward part of the duty, and therefore might say, it is in vain, God saith so, Mat. xv. 9. *In vain do they worship me, whose hearts are far from me, while they draw near with their mouth;* but whose fault is that? not God's, who is the rewarder of them that seek him diligently, but theirs who seek him carelessly. (2.) They insisted much upon it, that they had walked mournfully before God, whereas God had required them to serve him with gladness, and to walk cheerfully before him. They, by their own superstitions, made the service of God a task and drudgery to themselves, and then complained of it as a hard service. The yoke of Christ is easy; it is the yoke of antichrist that is heavy. (3.) They complained that they had got nothing by their religion, they were still in poverty and affliction, and behind hand in the world. This is an old piece of impiety, Job xxi. 14, 15. *What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?* Elihu chargeth Job with saying something like this, Job xxxiv. 9. *It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.* The enemies of religion do but set up against it the old cavils that have been long since answered and exploded. Perhaps this here refers to the errors of the sect of the Sadducees, which was the scandal of the Jewish church in its latter days; they denied a future state, and then said, it was vain to serve God, which has indeed some colour in it, for *if in this life only we had hope in Christ, we were of all men most miserable,* 1 Cor. xv. 19. Note, Those do a great deal of wrong to God's honour, who say that religion is either an unprofitable, or an unpleasant thing; for the matter is not so, wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and wisdom's gains better than that of fine gold.

(2.) They maintained that wickedness was the way to prosperity, for they had observed that the workers of wickedness were set up in the world, and they that tempted God were delivered, ver. 15. The outward prosperity of sinners in their sins, as it has weakened the hands of the godly in their godliness, Psal. lxxiii. 13. so it has strengthened the hands of the wicked in their wickedness. Note, (1.) They that work wickedness, tempt God by presumptuous sins, they do as it were try God, whether he can and will punish them as he hath said in his word, and, in effect, challenge him to do his worst, by provoking him in the highest degree. (2.) Those that tempt God by their wicked works, are many times both delivered out of the adversity into which they were justly brought, and advanced to the prosperity which they were utterly unworthy of; they are not only set up once, but when we thought their day was come to fall, and they were in trouble, yet they were delivered, and set up again; so strangely did providence seem to smile upon them. (3.) Though it be thus, yet it will not warrant us to call the proud happy. For they may be delivered and set up for a while, but it will appear that God resists them, and that their pride is a preface to their fall; and if so, they are truly miserable, and it is folly to call them happy, and to bless them whom the Lord abhors. Wait a while and you shall see them that work wickedness set up as a mark to the arrows of God's vengeance, and them that tempt God delivered to the tormentors. Judge of things as they will appear shortly, when the doom of these proud sinners, which follow here, chap. iv. 1. comes to be executed to the utmost.

2. Here is the gracious notice God takes of the pious talk of the saints in Zion, and the gracious recompence of that. Even in this corrupt and degenerate age, when there was so great a decay, nay, so great a contempt of serious godliness; yet there were some that retained their integrity, and zeal for God; and let us see,

1. How they distinguished themselves, and what their character was; it was the reverse of theirs that spoke so much against God, for, (1.) They feared the Lord, that is the beginning of wisdom, and the root of all religion; they revered the majesty of God, submitted to his authority, and had a dread of his wrath, in all they thought and said, they humbly complied with God, and never spoke any stout words against him. In every age there has been a remnant that feared the Lord, though sometimes but a little remnant. (2.) They thought upon his name, i. e. They seriously considered, and frequently meditated upon the discoveries God has made of himself in his word, and by his providences; and their meditation of him is sweet to them, and influenceth them. They thought on his name, i. e. They consulted the honour of God, and aimed at that as their ultimate end in all they did. Note, Those that know the name of God, should often think of, and dwell upon it in their thoughts; it is a copious, curious subject, and frequent thoughts of it will contribute

very much to our communion with God, and the stirring up of our devout affections to him. (3.) They *spake often one to another*, concerning the God they *feared*, and that name of his which they *thought* so much of, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and a good man, out of a good treasure there, will bring forth good things. They that *feared the Lord*, kept together as those that were company for each other; they *spake kindly and endearingly* one to another, for the preserving and promoting of mutual love, that that might not wax cold, when iniquity did thus abound. They *spake knowingly and edifyingly* to one another, for the increasing and improving of faith and holiness; they *spake one to another* in the language of them that fear the Lord, and think on his name, the language of Canaan; when profaneness was come to so great a height, as to trample upon all that is sacred, then they that feared the Lord, *spake often one to another*; (1.) Then when iniquity was bold and barefaced, the people of God took courage and stirred up themselves, *the innocent against the hypocrite*, Job xvii. 8. The worse others are, the better we should be; when vice is *daring*, let not virtue be *sneaking*. Then when religion was reproached and misrepresented, its friends did all they could to support the credit of it, and to keep it in countenance. It had been suggested, that the ways of God are melancholy, unpleasant ways, solitary, and sorrowful, and therefore then they that feared God, studied to evidence the contrary, by their cheerfulness in mutual love and converse; that they might *put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*. (3.) Then when seducers were busy to deceive, and to possess unwary souls with prejudices against religion, they that feared God were industrious to arm themselves and one another, against the contagion, by mutual instructions, excitements, and encouragements; and to strengthen one another's hands. Asevil communication corrupts good minds, and manners, so good communication confirms them.

2. How God dignified them, and what further honour and favour he intended for them. They who *spake stoutly against God*, no doubt, looked with disdain and displeasure upon those that *feared him*, hectoring and bantering them, but they had little reason to regard that, or to be disturbed at it, when God countenanced them.

1. He took notice of their pious discourses, and was graciously present at their conferences, *the Lord hearkened and heard it*, and was well pleased with it. God saith, *Jer. viii. 6.* that he *hearkened and heard* what bad men would say, and they *spake not right*; here he *hearkened and heard* what good men did say, for they *spake aright*. Note, The gracious God observes all the gracious words that proceed out of the mouths of his people; they need not desire that men may hear them and commend them; let them not seek praise from men by them, nor affect to be taken notice of by them, but let it content them, that be the conference never so private, God sees and hears in secret, and will reward openly. When the two disciples going to Emmaus were discoursing concerning Christ, he hearkened and heard, and joined himself to them, and made a third. *Luke xxiv. 15.*

2. He kept an account of them. *A book of remembrance was written before him*. Not that the eternal mind needs to be minded of things by books and writings, but it is an expression after the manner of men, intimating that their pious affections and performances are kept in remembrance, as punctually and particularly, as if they were writ in a book; as if journals were kept of all their conferences. Great kings had books of remembrance written, and read before them, in which were entered all the services done them, when, and by whom, as *Ezra ii. 23.* God in like manner remembers the services of his people, that in the review of them he may say, *Well done*, and enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. God has a book for the sighs and tears of his mourners, *Psal. lvi. 8.* much more for the pleadings of his advocates. Never was any good word spoken of God, or for God, from an honest heart, but it was registered, that it might be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, and in no wise lose its reward.

3. He promiseth them a share in his glory hereafter. *Ver. 17.* They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels. When God utterly cuts off the Jewish church and nation for their infidelity, the remnant among them that believe his word, and having waited for the consolation of Israel, welcome him when he comes, shall be admitted into the Christian church, and shall become a peculiar people to God; God will take care of them, that they perish not with them that believe not; but that they be hid in the day of the Lord's anger against that nation. They shall be my segullah, my peculiar treasure, (it is the word used, *Exod. xix. 5.*) in the day when I make or do, what I have said and designed to do, so some read it. These pious ones shall have all the glorious privileges of God's Israel appropriated to them, and centering in them; they shall now be the peculiar treasure, when the rest are rejected; they shall now be the vessels of mercy, and honour, when the rest are made vessels of wrath and dishonour, vessels in which is no pleasure. This may be applied to all the faithful people of God, and the distinction he will put between them and others in the great day. Note, 1. The saints are God's jewels, they are highly esteemed of by him, and are dear to him, they are comely, with the comeliness that he puts upon them, and he is pleased to glory in them, they are a royal

diadem in his hand, *Isa. lxii. 3.* He looks upon them as his own proper goods, his choice goods, his treasure, laid up in his cabinet, and the furniture of his closet, *Psal. cxxxv. 4.* the rest of the world is but lumber in comparison with them. 2. There is a day coming, when God will make up his jewels; they shall be gathered up out of the dirt, into which they are now thrown, and gathered together from all the places to which they are now scattered; he shall send forth his angels to gather his elect, that are his jewels, from the four winds of heaven, *Mat. xxiv. 31.* to gather his jewels into his jewel-house, as the wheat from several fields into the barn. All the saints will then be gathered to Christ, and none but saints, and saints made perfect; then God's jewels will be made up, as stones into a crown, as stars into a constellation. 3. Those who now own God for theirs, he will then own them for his, will publicly confess them before angels and men. They shall be mine, their sanctification shall be compleated, and so they shall be perfectly and entirely mine, without any remaining interests of the world and the flesh: Their relation to God shall be acknowledged, and his propriety in them; he will separate them from those that are not his, and give them their portion with those that are his; for to them it shall be said, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.* They were in doubt sometimes, whether they were belonging to God or no, but the matter shall then be put out of doubt, God himself will say unto them, *you are mine*; now, their relation to God is what they are reproached with, but it will then be gloried in, God himself will glory in it.

4. He promiseth them a share in his grace now. *I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serves him.* God had promised to own them as his, and take them to be with him, but it might be a discouragement to them, to think that they had offended God, and he might justly disown them and cast them off, but as to that he saith, *I will spare them*, I will not deal with them as they deserve. *I will rejoice over them*, so some expound it, as the bridegroom over his bride, *Isa. lxii. 5.* *Zeph. iii. 17.* But the word usually signifies to spare, with commiseration, and compassion, as a father pities his children, *Psal. ciii. 13.* Note, 1. It is our duty to serve God with the disposition of children; we must be his sons, must, by a new birth, partake of a divine nature, must consent to the covenant of adoption, and partake of the Spirit of adoption; and we must be his servants, God will not have his children trained up in idleness, they must do him service, and they must do it from a principle of love, with cheerfulness and delight, and as those that are therein serving their own true interest, and this is serving, as a son with the father, *Phil. ii. 22.* (2.) If we serve God with the disposition of children, he will spare us with the tenderness and compassion of a father. Even God's children that serve him, stand in need of sparing mercy, that mercy to which we owe it, that we are not consumed, that mercy which keeps out of hell. Nehemiah, when he had done much good, yet knowing there is not a just man on earth, that doth good and sins not, and that every sin deserves God's wrath, prays, *Lord, spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy*, see *Neh. xiii. 22.* And God as a father will shew them this mercy. He will not be extreme to mark what we do amiss, but will make the best of us, and our poor performances; will mitigate the afflictions his children are exercised with, and save them from the ruin they deserve. The father continues to spare the son, and doth it with complacency, because he is his own; thus God will spare humble penitents and petitioners, as a man spares his son that serves him, though we do him so little service, nay, though we do him so much disservice.

3. How they will thus be distinguished from the children of this world, *ver. 18.* Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between sinners and saints; between those that serve God, and make conscience of their duty to him, and those that serve him not, but put contempt upon his service. You that now speak against God as making no difference between good and bad, and therefore say it is vain to serve him, *ver. 14.* you shall be made to see your error; you that would speak for God, but know not what to say as to this, that there seems to be one event to the righteous and to the wicked, and all things come alike to all, will then have the matter set in a true light, and will see to your everlasting satisfaction the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Then ye shall return, i. e. you shall change your mind, and come to a right understanding of the thing. This primarily respects the manifest difference that was made by the divine providence between the believing Jews, and those that persisted in their infidelity at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation by the Romans! But it is to have its full accomplishment at the second coming of Jesus Christ, and that great discriminating day, when it shall be easy enough to discern between the righteous and the wicked. Note, (1.) All the children of men are either righteous or wicked, either such as serve God, or such as serve him not. This is that division of the children of men which will last for ever, and by which their eternal state will be determined; all are going either to heaven or hell. 2. In this world it is many times hard to discern between the righteous and the wicked, they are mingled together, good fish and bad in the same net, the righteous are so dissembled, and the wicked so disguised, that we are often deceived

ceived in our opinions concerning both the one and the other ; there are many that we think serve God, who having not their hearts right with him, will be found none of his servants ; and on the other hand, many will be found his faithful servants, who because they followed not with us, we thought did not serve him ; but that which especially raised the difficulty here was, that the divine providence seemed to make no difference between the *righteous* and the *wicked*, you could not know wicked men by God's *frowning upon them*, for they commonly prospered in the world, nor righteous men by his *smiling upon them*, for they were involved with others in the same common calamity ; none now knows God's *love or hatred* by *all that is before him*, Eccl. ix. 1. (3.) At the bar of Christ in the last judgment, it will be easy to *discern between the righteous and the wicked* ; for then every man's *character* will be both perfected, and perfectly *discovered*, every man will then appear in his true colours, and his disguises will be taken off ; some mens sins indeed go beforehand, and you may now tell who is wicked, but others follow after, however in the great day we shall see who was *righteous*, and who *wicked*. Every man's *condition* likewise will be both perfected, and everlastingly *determined* ; the righteous will then be perfectly happy, and the wicked perfectly miserable, without mixture or alloy, when the *righteous* are all set on the right-hand of Christ, and invited to come for a blessing, and all the wicked on his left-hand, and are bid to depart with a curse, then it will be easy to discern between them. As to ourselves therefore we are concerned to think among which we shall have our lot, and as to others must *judge nothing before the time*.

CHAP. IV.

We have here proper instructions given us (very proper to close the canon of the Old Testament with) (1.) Concerning the state of recompence and retribution that is before us ; the misery of the wicked, and the happiness of the righteous in that state, ver. 1, 2, 3. And this is represented to us under a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the unbelieving Jews with it, and of the comforts and triumphs of those among them that received the gospel. (2.) Concerning the state of trial and preparation we are now in, in which we are directed to have an eye to divine revelation, and to follow that ; they then must stick to the law of Moses, ver. 4. and expect a further discovery of God's will by Elijah the prophet, i. e. by John Baptist, the harbinger of the Messiah, ver. 5, 6. The last chapter of the New Testament is much to the same purpose, setting before us heaven and hell in the other world, and obliging us to adhere to the word of God in this world.

1. **F**OR behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. 2. ¶ But unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings ; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. 3. And ye shall tread down the wicked ; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I shall do *this*, saith the LORD of hosts.

The great and terrible day of the Lord is here prophesied of ; which, like the pillar of cloud and fire, shall have a dark side turned towards the Egyptians that fight against God, and a bright side towards the faithful Israelites that follow him. *The day cometh*, i. e. the Lord cometh, the day of the Lord ; and it hath reference both to the *first* and to the *second* coming of Jesus Christ ; the day of both was fixed, and should answer the character here given of it.

1. In both Christ is a *consuming fire* to those that rebel against him. The day of his coming shall *burn as an oven* ; it shall be a day of wrath, of *fiery indignation*. This was foretold concerning the Messiah, *Psal. xxi. 9. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, and shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger* : it will be a day of terror and destruction like the burning of a city, or rather of a wood, the trees whereof are withered and dried, for to that the allusion seems to be as *Isa. x. 17, 18. The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his holy One for a flame, and it shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field*. Now observe here, (1.) Who shall be *fuel* to this fire ; all the *proud* in heart, whose *words* have been *stout against God*, and their necks stiff, and unapt to yield to the yoke of his commandments. All those that in the pride of their countenances will not *seek after God*, nor submit to the grace and government of Jesus Christ ; all that proudly say, they will not have Christ to reign over them. And all those that do *wickedly* in their affections and conversations, that wilfully persist in sin, in contempt of, and contradiction to, the law of God ; they are

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such as *do wickedly against the covenant*, as another prophet had lately expressed it, *Dan. xi. 32. God that has a perfect knowledge of every one's character, knows who are the proud, and of every one's actions, knows who they are that do wickedly* ; and they shall be as *stubble* to this fire, they shall be consumed by it, easily consumed, utterly consumed, and it is wholly long of themselves that they shall be so, for they make themselves *stubble*, i. e. combustible matter to this fire. If they were not *stubble*, it would not burn them ; for the fire will be to every man according as he and his *works* are found ; if they be *wood, hay, and stubble*, they will be *consumed*, but if they be *gold, silver, and precious stones*, they will *abide the fire*, and be purified by it, *1 Cor. iii. 13, 14, 15. They that by their unbelief oppose Christ, thereby set themselves as briers and thorns before a devouring fire*, *Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.*

(2.) What shall be the force, and what the fruit of this fire ? *The day that cometh shall burn them up*, shall both terrify and ruin them, and shall leave them *neither root nor branch*, neither *son nor nephew*, so the Chaldee paraphrase ; neither they nor their posterity shall be spared ; they shall be wholly extirpated and cut off. *Who knows the power of God's anger ? The proud and those that do wickedly will not fear it, but they shall be made to feel it. Where are they now that called the proud happy ? when thus they are made completely miserable ; when there remains no branch of their happiness to be enjoyed for the present, nor any root of it out of which it might again spring up.*

Now this was fulfilled, (1.) When Christ in his doctrine spoke terror and condemnation to the *proud Pharisees*, and other the Jews that *did wickedly*. When he sent that *fire on the earth*, which burnt up the chaff of the traditions of the elders, and the corrupt glosses they had put upon the law of God. (2.) When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the nation of the Jews, as a nation, quite blotted out from under heaven, and neither *root nor branch* left them. This seems to be principally intended here ; our Saviour saith, that those should be the *days of vengeance*, when all the things that were written to that purpose should be fulfilled, *Luke xxi. 22. Then the unbelieving Jews were as stubble to the devouring fire of God's judgments*, which gathered together to them as the eagles to the carcase. (3.) It is certainly applicable, and is to be applied to the day of judgment, both to the particular judgment at death, (some of the Jewish doctors refer it to the *punishment that seizeth on the souls of the wicked immediately after they go out of the body*) but especially it will have its accomplishment in the general judgment, at the end of time ; when Christ shall be revealed in *flaming fire*, to execute judgment on the *proud*, and all that *do wickedly* ; the whole world shall then *burn as an oven*, and all the *children of this world*, that set their hearts upon it, and chuse their portion in it, shall take their ruin with it, and the fire then kindled shall never be quenched.

2. In both Christ is a *rejoycing light* to those that serve him faithfully, to those that *fear his name* and give him the glory due to it, *ver. 2. who stand in awe of that name of his, which the wicked profane, and trample upon. Here is mercy and comfort kept in store for all those that fear the Lord, and think on his name. Observe,*

1. Whence this mercy and comfort shall flow to them. To you that fear my name *shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings*. The day that comes, as it will be a stormy day to the wicked, a day in which God will rain upon them *fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest*, as he did on Sodom, *Psal. xi. 6. a day of clouds and of thick darkness*, *Amos v. 18, 20. so it will be a fair and bright day to those that fear God, and reviving as the rising sun is to the earth, and particular notice is taken of the rising of the sun upon Zoar, when that was mercifully distinguished from the cities of the plain whom the fire consumed, see Gen. xix. 23. so, to you that fear God is comfort spoken, when the hearts of others fail for fear, let them lift up their heads for joy, for their redemption draws nigh, Luke xxi. 28. But by the sun of righteousness here we are certainly to understand Jesus Christ, who would undertake to secure the believing remnant in the day of the general destruction of the Jews, from falling with the rest, and to comfort them in that day of distress and perplexity with his consolations ; he directed them that were in Judea to *flee to the mountains*, *Mat. xxiv. 16. and they did so, and were all safe and easy in Pella. But it is to be applied more generally, (1.) To the coming of Christ in the flesh to seek and save them that were lost ; then the sun of righteousness arose upon this dark world. Christ is the light of the world, the true light, the great light that makes day, and rules the day, John viii. 12. as the sun ; he is the light of men, John i. 4. is to mens souls as the sun is to the visible world, which without the sun would be a dungeon, so would mankind be darkness itself without the light of the glory of God, shining in the face of Christ. Christ is the sun that has light in himself, and is the fountain of light, Psal. xix. 4, 5, 6. he is the sun of righteousness, for he is himself a righteous Saviour ; righteousness is both the light and the heat of this sun, the word of his righteousness is so, it guides, instructs, and quickens ; so is the everlasting righteousness he has brought in ; he is made of God to us righteousness, he is the Lord our righteousness, and therefore is**

fitly called *the sun of righteousness*; thro' him we are justified and sanctified, and so are brought to *see light*. This sun of righteousness in the fulness of time *arose* upon the world, and with him *light came into the world*, John iii. 19. a *great light*, Mat. iv. 16. In him the *day-spring from on high visited us*, to give light to them that sit in darkness, Luke i. 78, 79. Righteousness sometimes signifies *mercy* or *benignity*, and it was in Christ that the *tender mercy of our God* visited us. (2.) It is applicable to the graces and comforts of the holy Spirit brought into the souls of men, Grotius understands it of Christ's giving the Spirit to those that are his, to shine in their hearts, and to be a *comforter* to them, a *sun* and a *shield*. Those that are possessed and governed by a *holy fear of God*, and a dread of his majesty, shall have his *love also shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost*, and then the sun may be said to *arise* there, and to bring both a *delightful day*, and a *fruitful spring* along with it. (3.) Christ's second coming will be a glorious and welcome sun-rising to all that *fear his name*; it will be that *morning* of the resurrection, in which the *upright shall have dominion*, Psal. xlix. 14. That day which to the wicked will *burn as an oven*, will to the righteous be bright as the morning, and it is what they wait for, *more than they that wait for the morning*.

2. What this mercy and comfort shall bring with it to them. He shall arise with *healing under his wings*, or in his rays or beams, which are as the wings of the sun; Christ came as *the sun* to bring not only light to a dark world, but health to a diseased, distempered world; the Jews (saith Dr Pocock) have a proverbial saying, *As the sun riseth, infirmities decrease*; the flowers which drooped and languished all night, revive in the morning. Christ came into the world to be the great physician, yea and the great medicine too, both the balm in Gilead, and the physician there; when he was upon earth he went about as the sun in his circuit, doing this good, he *healed all manner of sicknesses and diseases among the people*; he healed by whole-sale as the sun doth; he shall arise with *healing in his skirts*; so some read it, and they apply to it the story of the woman's touching *the hem of his garment*, and being thereby *made whole*, and his finding that *virtue went out of him*, Mark v. 28, 29, 30. But his healing bodily diseases was a specimen of his great design in coming into the world to heal the diseases of mens souls, and to put them into a good state of health, that they may serve and enjoy both God and themselves.

3. What good effect it shall have upon them.

1. It shall make them *vigorous* in themselves. *Ye shall go forth*, as those that are healed go abroad, and return to their business. The souls shall *go forth* out of their bodies at death, and the bodies out of their graves at the resurrection, as prisoners out of their dungeons, and both to *see the light*, and be *set at liberty*. *Ye shall go forth* as plants out of the earth, when in the spring the sun returns. Some make it to mean the *going forth* of the Christians from Jerusalem, and the escape they thereby made from its destruction. And thus the souls on whom the sun of righteousness ariseth *go forth* out of this world; go forth out of Babylon, as those that are made *free indeed*. *Ye shall likewise grow up*, being restored to health and liberty ye shall increase in knowledge and grace, and spiritual strength. The souls on which the sun of righteousness riseth are *growing up* towards *the perfect man*; those that by the grace of God are made wise and good, by the same grace are made wiser and better; and their path, like that of the rising sun, *shines more and more to the perfect day*, Prov. iv. 18. Their growth is compared to that of the *calves of the stall*, which is a quick, strong, and useful growth. *Ye shall grow up*, not as the *flower of the field*, which is slender and weak and of little use, and withereth soon after it is grown up, but as the *calves of the stall*, that, as one of the rabbins expounds it, *grow great in flesh and fatness*, with which both God's *altars* and mens *tables* are replenished; so the growth of the saints, on whom the sun of righteousness ariseth, honours both God and man. Some read it, instead of *ye shall grow up*, *ye shall move your selves*, or *leap for joy*, shall be as frolicksome as calves of the stall, when they are let loose in the open field; and it notes the joy of the saints, that rejoice in Christ Jesus; they shall even leap for joy; are *always caused to triumph*.

2. It shall make them *victorious* over their enemies, ver. 3. *Ye shall tread down the wicked*. Time was when the wicked trod them down, said to their souls, *bow down that we may go over*, but the day will come when they shall *tread down the wicked*; being made Christ's footstool, they are made theirs; Psal. cx. 1. and come and *worship before the feet* of the church, Rev. iii. 9. *The elder shall serve the younger*. When believers by faith *overcome the world*, when they suppress their own corrupt appetites and passions, when the God of peace bruise Satan under their feet, then they *tread down the wicked*. When it came to the turn of the Christians to triumph over the Jews that had insulted over them, then this promise was fulfilled; *they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet*, they shall not only be trodden down, but trodden to dirt. When the day that comes shall have *burnt them up*, they shall trample upon them as ashes; when the righteous shall rise to *everlasting life*, the wicked shall rise to *everlasting contempt*; and tho' they shall not triumph over

them, they shall triumph in that God, whose justice is glorified in their destruction. The saints in glory are said to have power given them over the nations, to *rule them with a rod of iron*, Rev. ii. 26, 27. *This ye shall do, in the day that I shall do this*. Note, The saints triumphs are all owing to God's victories; it is not they that *do this*, but God that doth it for them; that faith, *come, set your feet on the necks of these kings*. Some read it, *in the day that I make*, or shall make; the *great day* that I shall make remarkable, of which you will say with joy, *This is the day that the Lord has made*; the day of the destruction of Jerusalem is called the *great and terrible day of the Lord*, Acts ii. 20. and our Saviour in foretelling that destruction made use of such expressions as like these here, might be applied likewise to the *end of the world*, and the *last judgment*; for it was such a terrible revelation of the wrath of God from heaven, and caused such a scene of horror upon this earth, as that it might fitly serve for a type of that glorious transaction which will be an outlet to the days of time, and an inlet to the days of eternity; and by the accomplishment of these prophecies in the ruin of the Jewish nation, we should have our faith confirmed in the assurances Christ has given us concerning the dissolution of all things; *surely I come quickly*, so saith Christ *the Lord of hosts*, to whom all power in heaven and earth is committed.

4. ¶ Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. 5. ¶ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. 6. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

This is doubtless intended for a solemn conclusion, not only of this prophecy, but of the canon of the Old Testament, and is a plain information that they were not to expect any more sayings or writings by divine inspiration, no more of the dictates of the Spirit of prophecy, till the beginning of the gospel of the Messiah: which sets aside the Apocrypha as no part of the holy writ, and which therefore the Jews never received.

Now prophecy ceaseth, and is about to be sealed up, there are two things required of the people of God that lived then.

1. They must keep up an *obedient veneration* for the law of Moses, ver. 4. *Remember ye the law of Moses my servant*, and observe to do according to it, even that law which *I commanded unto him in Horeb*, that fiery law, which was intended for all Israel with the statutes and judgments; not only the law of the ten commandments, but all the other appointments ceremonial and judicial then and there given. Observe here, (1.) The honourable mention that is made of Moses, the first writer of the Old Testament, in Malachi, the last writer; God by him calls him *Moses my servant*, for the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. See how the penmen of scripture, tho' they lived in several ages at a great distance from each other, (it was above one thousand two hundred years from Moses to Malachi) all concurred in the same thing, and supported one another, being all acted and guided by one and the same Spirit. (2.) The honourable mention that is made of the *law of Moses*; it was what God himself *commanded*, he owns it for his law, and he commanded it for all Israel, as the municipal law of their kingdom. Thus will God *magnify his law*, and make it *honourable*. Note, We are therefore concerned to keep the law, because God has *commanded* it, and commanded it for us, for we are the spiritual Israel; and if we expect the benefit of the covenant with Israel, Heb. viii. 10. we must observe the commands given to Israel, those of them that were intended to be of perpetual obligation. (3.) The summary of our duty, with reference to the law; we must remember it. Forgetfulness of the law is at the bottom of all our transgressions of it; if we would rightly remember it, we could not but conform to it; remember it when we have occasion to use it; remember both the *commands* themselves, and the *sanctions* wherewith they are enforced. The office of conscience is to bid us *remember the law*.

But how doth this charge, to *remember* the law of Moses, come in here? (1.) This prophet had reproved them for many gross corruptions and irregularities, both in worship and conversation, and now for the reforming and amending of what was amiss, he only chargeth them to *remember the law of Moses*; keep to that rule, and you will do all you should do. He will lay upon them *no other burthen*, but what they have received, hold that fast, Rev. ii. 24, 25. Note, Corrupt churches are to be reformed by the written word, and reduced into order, by being reduced to the standard of *the law and the testimony*, see 1 Cor. xi. 23. (2.) The church had long enjoyed the benefit of prophets, extraordinary messengers from God, and now they had a whole book of their prophecies put together, and it was a *finished piece*, but they must not think that hereby the *law of Moses* was superseded, and was become as an almanack out of date, as if now they

they were advanced to a higher form, and might forget that; no, the prophets do but confirm and apply the law, and press the observance of that, and therefore still *remember the law*. Note, Even when we have made considerable advances in knowledge, yet still we must retain the first principles of practical religion, and resolve to abide by them. Those that study the writings of the prophets, and the apocalypse, must still *remember the law of Moses*, and the four gospels. (3.) *Prophecy* was now to *cease* in the church for some ages, and the Spirit of prophecy not to return till the *beginning of the gospel*, and now they are bid to *remember the law of Moses*, let them live by the rules of that, and live upon the promises of that. Note, We need not complain for want of visions and revelations, as long as we have the written word, and the canon of scripture complete, to be our guide; for that is the *most sure word of prophecy*, and the touchstone by which we are to *try the spirits*. Though we have not prophets, yet as long as we have bibles we may keep our communion with God, and keep ourselves in his way. (4.) They were to expect the coming of the Messiah, and the preaching of his gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom, and in that expectation they must *remember the law of Moses*, and live in obedience to that, and then they might expect the comforts that the Messiah would bring to the *willing and obedient*. Let them observe the law of Moses, and live up to the light which that gave them, and then they might expect the benefit of the gospel of Christ, for *to him that has, and useth what he has well, more shall be given, and he shall have abundance*.

2. They must keep up a *believing expectation* of the gospel of Christ, and must look for the beginning of it in the appearing of *Elijah the prophet*, ver. 5, 6. *Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet*. Though the Spirit of prophecy cease for a time, and you will have only the law to consult, yet it shall revive again in one that shall be sent *in the spirit and power of Elias*, Luke i. 17. *The law and the prophets were until John*, Luke xvi. 16. they continued to be the only lights of the church, till that *morning-star* appeared. Note, As God never *left himself without witness* in the world, so neither in the church, but as there was occasion carried the light of divine revelation further and further to the perfect day. They had now *Moses* and the *prophets*, and might *bear them*, but God will go further, he will send them *Elijah*. Observe,

1. *Who* this prophet is that shall be sent; it is *Elijah*; the Jewish doctors will have it to be the same *Elijah* that prophesied in Israel in the days of Ahab, that he shall come again to be the forerunner of the Messiah; yet others of them say not the same person, but another of the same spirit; it should seem, those different sentiments they had when they asked John, *Art thou Elias?* or *that prophet* that should bear his name? John i. 19, 20. But we Christians know very well, that John Baptist was the *Elias* that was to come, Mat. xvii. 9, 13. and very expressly, Mat. xi. 14. *This is Elias which was for to come*, and ver. 10. the same of whom it is written, *Behold I send my messenger*, Mal. iii. 1. *Elijah* was a man of great austerity and mortification, zealous for God, bold in reproving sin, and active to reduce an apostate people to God and their duty, and John Baptist was animated by the same spirit and power, and preached repentance and reformation, as *Elias* had done; and all held him for a prophet, as they did *Elijah* in his day, and that his baptism was *from heaven*, and not of men. Note, When God hath such work to do, as was formerly to be done, he can raise up such men to do it, as he formerly raised up, and can put into a John Baptist the spirit of an *Elias*.

2. *When* he shall be sent; before the appearing of the Messiah, which because it was the judgment of this world, and introduced the ruin of the Jewish church and nation, is here called the *coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*, and this John Baptist gave them fair warning of, when he told them of the *wrath to come*, that *wrath to the uttermost*, which was hastening upon them, and put them into a way of escape from it, and of the

fan in Christ's hand, with which Christ would thoroughly purge his floor; see Mat. iii. 7, 10, 12. That day of Christ when he came first, was as that day will be when he comes again, though a *great and joyful day* to those that embrace him, yet a *great and dreadful day* to those that oppose him. John Baptist was sent before the coming of this day, to give people notice of it, that they might get ready for it, and go forth to meet it.

3. On *what errand* he shall be sent. *He shall turn the heart of the fathers to their children, and the heart of the children to their fathers*. i. e. He shall be employed in this work, he shall endeavour it, his doctrine and baptism shall have a direct tendency to it, and with many shall be successful: He shall be an instrument in God's hand, of *turning many to righteousness*, to the Lord their God, and so *making ready a people prepared for him*, Luke i. 16, 17. Note, The turning of souls to God and their duty, is the best preparation of them for the *great and dreadful day of the Lord*. It is promised concerning John, (1.) That he shall *give a turn* to things; shall make a *bold stand* against the strong torrent and long current of sin and impiety, which he found in full force among the children of his people, and bearing down all before it. This is called his *coming to restore all things*, Mat. xvii. 11. to set them to rights, that they may again go in the right chanel. (2.) That he shall preach a doctrine that shall reach mens *hearts*, and have an influence upon them, and work a change in them. God's word in his mouth shall be *quick and powerful*, and a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, many had their consciences awakened by his ministry, that yet were not thoroughly wrought upon, such a spirit and power was there in it. (3.) That he shall turn the hearts of the fathers *with* the children, and of the children *with* the fathers, (for so some read it) to God and to their duty; he shall call upon young and old to repent, and shall not labour in vain, for many of the *fathers* that are going off, and many of the children that are growing up, shall be wrought upon by his ministry. (4.) That thus he shall be an instrument to revive and confirm love and unity among relations, and shall *bring* them closer, and *bind* them faster to each other, by *bringing* and *binding* them all to their God. He shall prepare the way for that kingdom of heaven, which will make all its faithful subjects of *one heart*, and *one soul*, Acts iv. 32. which will be a kingdom of love, and will slay all enmities.

4. With *what view* he shall be sent on this errand, *lest I come and smite the earth*, i. e. the land of Israel, the body of the Jewish nation, that were of the earth earthly, *with a curse*. They by their impiety and impenitence in it, had laid themselves open to the *curse* of God, which is a *separation to all evil*, God was ready to *smite* them with that *curse*, to bring utter ruin upon them, to *strike home*, to *strike dead* with the curse; but he will yet once more try them, whether they will repent and return, and so prevent it; and therefore sends John Baptist to preach repentance to them, that their conversion might prevent their confusion; so unwilling is God that any should perish, so willing to have his anger turned away; had they universally repented and reformed, it had had this desired effect; but they generally rejecting the counsel of God in John's baptism, it proved *against themselves*, Luke vii. 30. and their *land* was *smitten* with the *curse*, which both it and they lie under to this day. Note, Those must expect to be smitten with a sword, with a curse, who *turn not to him that smiteth them* with a rod, with a cross, Isa. ix. 13. Now the *ax* is *laid to the root of the tree*, saith John Baptist, and it is ready to be smitten, to be cut down *with a curse*, therefore *bring forth fruit meet for repentance*. Some observe that the last word of the Old Testament is a *curse*, which threatens *the earth*, Zech. v. 3. which we must be made sensible of our danger of, that we may bid Christ welcome who comes with a blessing; and it is with a blessing, with the choicest of blessings, that the New Testament ends, and *with* it let us arm ourselves, or rather let God arm us, against this curse. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.*

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